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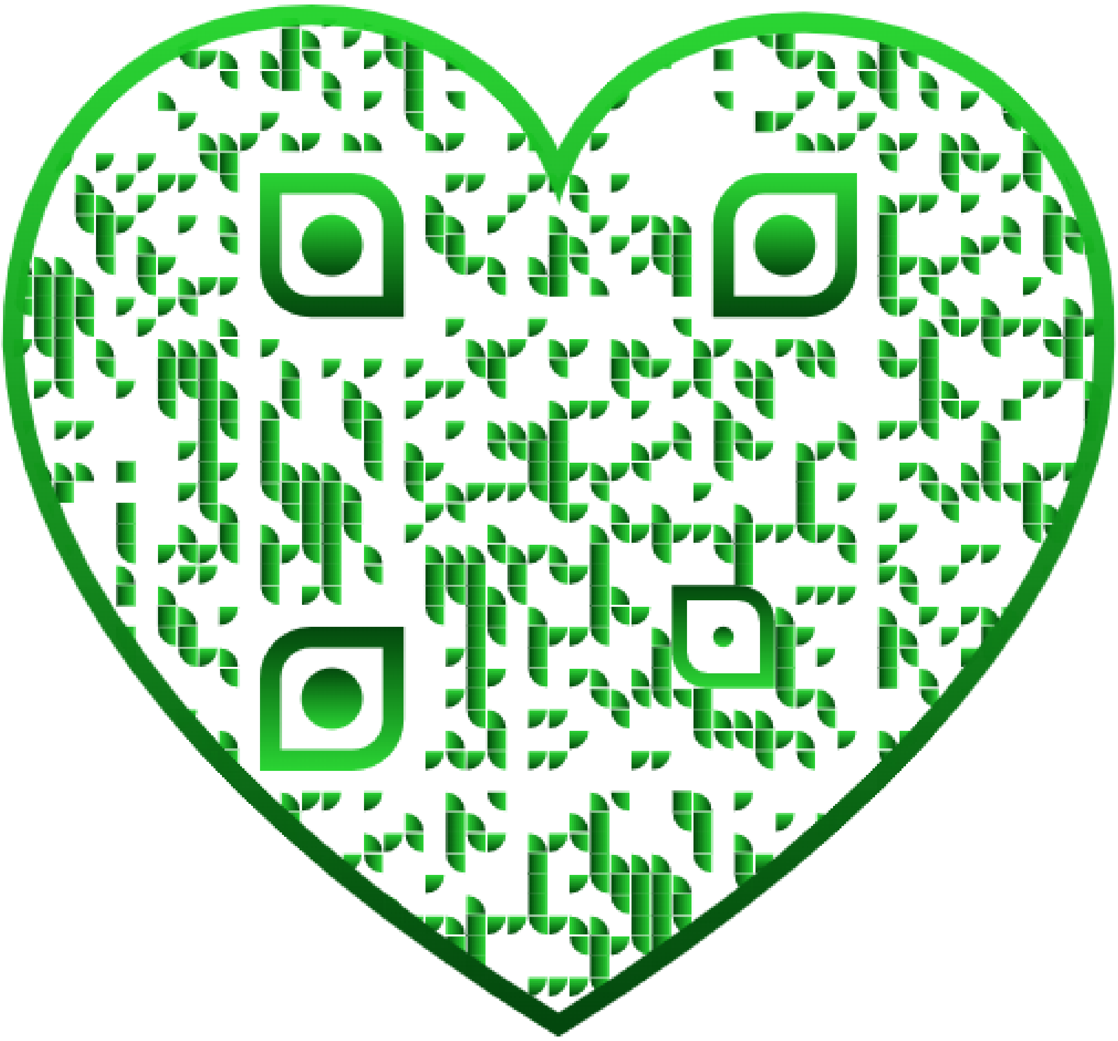

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classic motorcycle mechanics
ALL THAT'S BEST IN MODERN CLASSIC MOTORCYCLING

December 2025
Issue 458

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CLASSIC MOTORCYCLE MECHANICS magazine takes all responsible steps to ensure advice and technical tips are written by experienced and competent people. We also advise readers to seek further professional advice if they are unsure at any time. Anything technical written by the editor is exempt – he's rubbish with spanners.

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recycle

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# Changing tastes… it's a good thing!

I really don't mind getting old too much; I've said before that it's a gift not given to all of us.

Sure, as I write this, I'm just about recovered from a knee issue that came about thanks to quitting five-a-side football. With the knees giving me a bit of gyp, I took up swimming every day instead and promptly slipped off the ladder into the pool! What a plonker…

So, while things are slowing down a little on two legs for me, they also seem to be slowing down on two wheels. I used to love going fast: knees bent, head down under the bubble on road and track. But now I prefer a slower pace of life; I like to shun the tunnel vision of speed and widen my peripheral vision, and see also where I'm going and even where I've been.

This issue I wrestled with a Bear. A Bear 650. A bike I wasn't expecting to enjoy if I'm honest, but – blow me – I really did. It's an unhurried 650cc twin, under 50bhp, looks nice enough, goes well enough and is plenty cheap. It's one of those modern retros that looks old and yet it put a brand-new smile on my face.

We at CMM hope to put more of these modern takes on classic machines through their paces in 2026. Why? Well, because more manufacturers are building them because they know that people like you and me are going to buy them. Bikers seem to be getting older these days so it makes sense.

Of course, we will focus on the original (and best) machines of our passion and past-time, but we will be out there testing and experiencing the modern motorcycles that ape the age-old machines we love. Let me know what you think: do you own any retros?

Bertie Simmonds
**Editor**
BSimmonds@Mortons.co.uk

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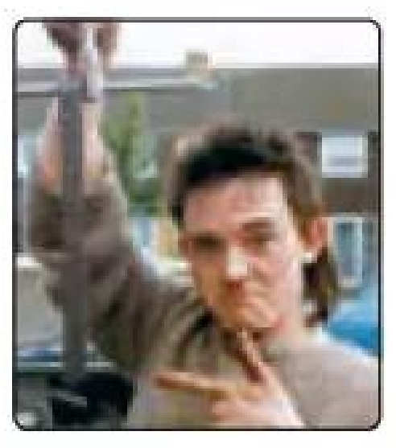
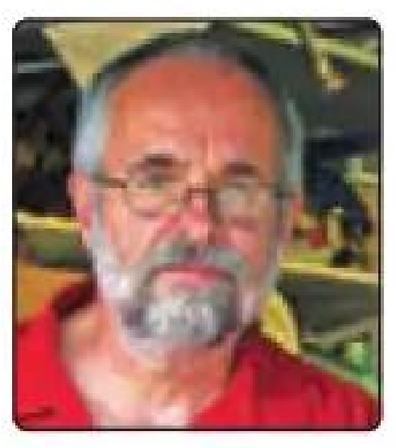
## Gary Chapman
**Super Snapper**
*It's good to shine a light on the man who pretty much shoots most of the tests and 99 per cent of our covers!*



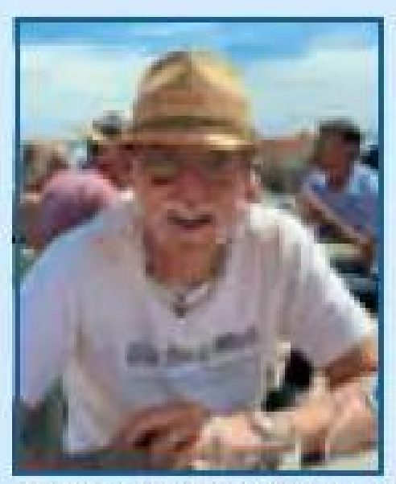
## Kev Raymond
**Bay-Watch Boy**
*Kev dives in where others fear to tread water: looking at the latest and often nastiest basket-case 'project' bikes.*

## Paul Berryman
**The Dukemeister**
*PB is the man who bought a cheap Ducati 748 and spent £748 sorting it. Then it fell over and more. Oh dear!*



## Mark Haycock
**CB400 man**
*Mark is cracking on with his Honda CB400 Four and trying his best to sort out the electrics.*

## Pip Higham
**Manc man!**
*There's a lovely, touching column from Pip this month as he recalls his dad: Ken, 'The Judge', a magical man.*

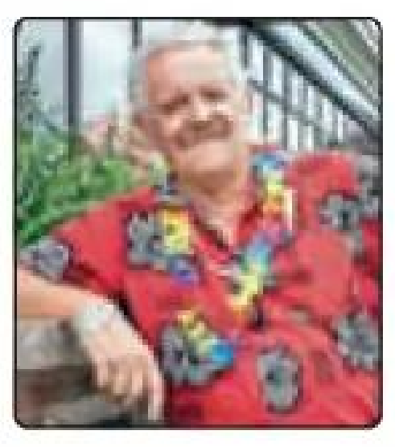


## Will Holman
EMPLOYEE OF THE MONTH!
**Back at last!**
*Yes! Will's back, he's bad and he's gone twice as mad. Why? Well, he's moving on (at last) with his Yamaha DT360 but then he's also gone and bought another machine which fits our classic criteria. Yup, he's only gone and bought a 20-year-old BMW R1200 GS. So, expect to see that in the next issue. We don't think he can blame the red wine this time. But we applaud him anyways… Top work that man!*

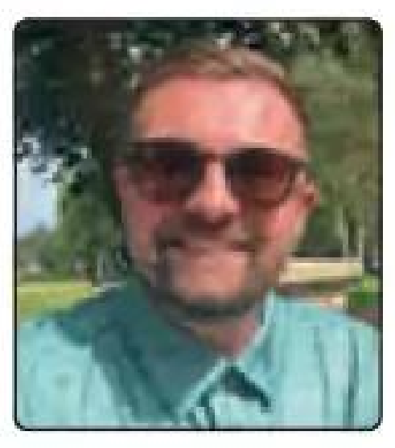
## Mike Cowton
**Unsung hero!!**
*As well as helping to spot errors, Mike also puts lots of kit to the test for us. Check it out on page 11.*

## Ralph Ferrand
**Stand and deliver!**
*Ralph is on with more stands in Tool of the Month and making foot-rests for his Kawasaki Z900 Special. Nice!*

## Ferret
**Bright spark!**
*If there was one person to explain why Steve's Rickuki didn't need a tiddler of a battery, it's this man! Legend!*



## Steve Cooper
**King of Holidays**
*Steve is riding a four-stroke four this issue – and he likes it! And he's also back on with his Rickuki project!*



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03/12/23

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LAVERDA
1000
JOTA
LAVERDA

# Bazza's first!

WORDS: **BERTIE SIMMONDS** PIC: **MORTONS ARCHIVE**

**Fifty years ago Barry Sheene took his first 500cc Grand Prix race win. It was just months after his near-death crash at Daytona and his victory set the scene for his two world championships in 1976 and 1977.**

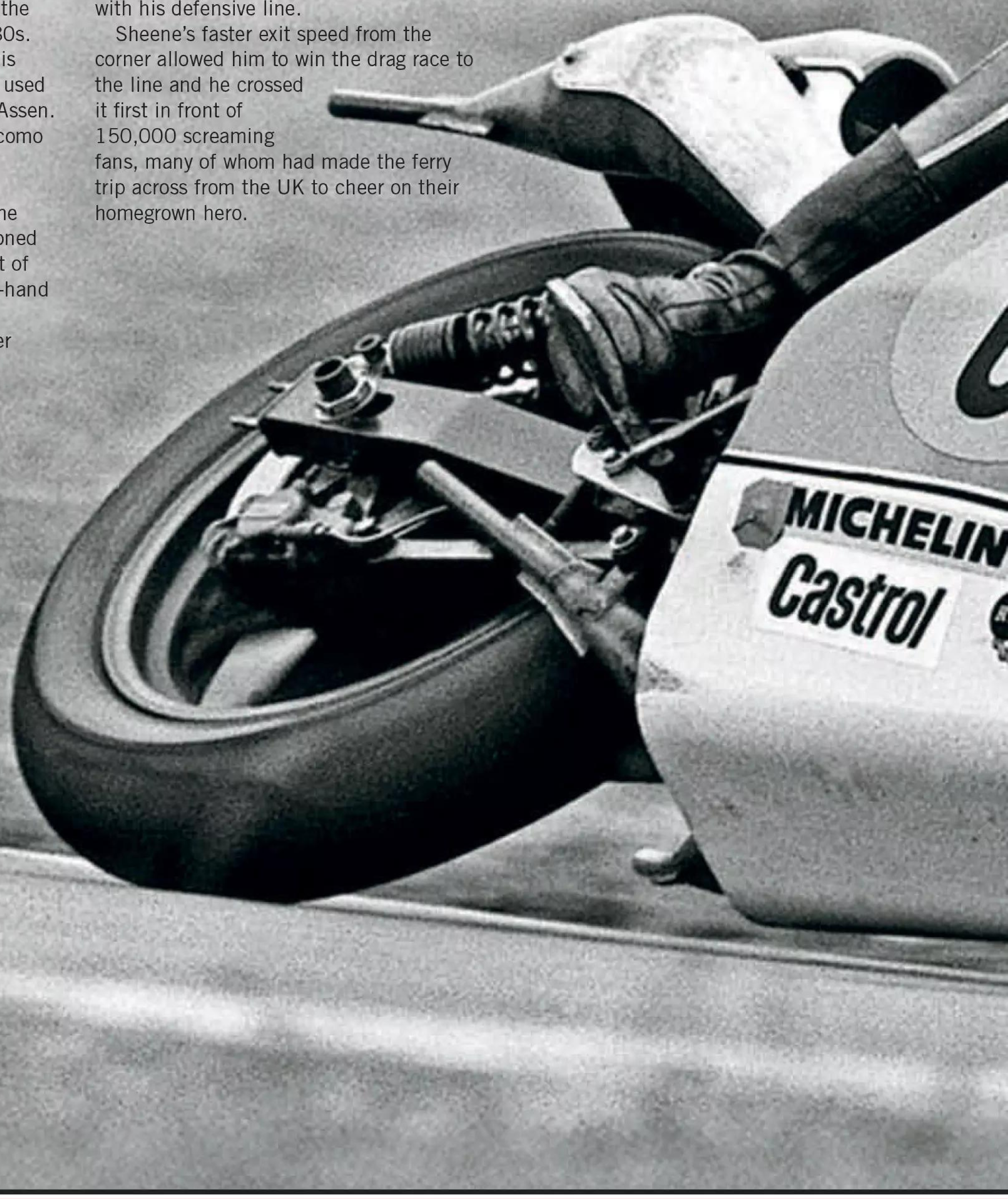
Suzuki's iconic RG500 would eventually win 49 races, four riders' titles and seven consecutive manufacturers' championships. It was also the machine of choice for the many privateers from the mid-1970s through to the early 1980s.

By the time Barry returned from his Daytona injury and had gotten more used to the Suzuki, it was time to win at Assen. Sheene eclipsed the old master Giacomo Agostini in practice by setting pole position, his first.

In the race itself, the young Sheene displayed all the racecraft of a seasoned veteran. Repeatedly he made a point of showing his front wheel on the right-hand side of Agostini's bike as the pair negotiated the final right-hand corner before the start/finish line. This was merely a ruse to fool Ago into thinking Sheene was going to overtake him on that side towards the end of the race. As a consequence, Agostini began taking a tight line into the chicane to protect his right-hand side from attack. Sheene, however, waited until the very last lap before passing Agostini on his left-hand side, which the Italian rider had left open with his defensive line.

Sheene's faster exit speed from the corner allowed him to win the drag race to the line and he crossed it first in front of 150,000 screaming fans, many of whom had made the ferry trip across from the UK to cheer on their homegrown hero.

That first 500cc winning Sheene bike (chassis number G56-1026) has been owned by collectors Steve Wheatman and Chris Wilson at different times; it's now owned by another collector and enthusiast. Barry Sheene himself rode the bike at the Assen Centennial event in 1998 and confirmed it was the real deal, signing the fuel tank as an endorsement – that's some machine, and some man... cmm



Winner 500 cc. Dutch TT
MICHELIN
KING
MASHE
SUZUKI
SUZUKI
KING HELMETS
6
6
CHAMPION
RENOLD

**Barry Sheene**
Wins at Assen, 1975

# cmm Stuff

## The latest riding kit, top tools, tyres, retro clothing and more!

Around: £279.99

### FURYGAN HARRIS TROOPER JACKET

We rather like the look of this jacket. Not too OTT and understated, something like a classic Barbour-type jacket. The name makes us think of a Brit-built special, but it's actually a functional jacket, complete with multiple pockets and a three-layer outer construction. You've also got a back and chest protector pocket and D3O shoulder and elbow protectors already loaded in.

You've got a waterproof inner pocket (one of seven pockets all-told); gussets behind the shoulders; multiple adjuster tabs; and a Furygan DW-Fit for a precise waist fit. You've also got a removable thermal liner which can be whipped out depending on the seasons, too.

***https://www.furygan.com***

£100

### KEIS HEATED SEAT CUSHION

At our age, the only 'hot ass' we want is our own and on this, the new KEIS Heated Seat Cushion delivers! From it you get uniform, controllable warmth and long-distance comfort at a fraction of the cost of a custom seat.

It combines a wide-coverage heating element with a pressure-relieving dual bladder design, breathable mesh padding, and anti-slip lining inside and out. Quick to fit, easy to use, and powered directly from your bike's 12V supply. Heat output is easily controlled via an integrated button with settings – Low, Medium and High – all accessible while wearing gloves, and with an illuminated indicator for each level. The cushion comes with a standard KEIS 12V power lead to wire to your bike's electrical system.

***www.keisapparel.com***

€27.50

### GOLD WING T-SHIRT

If you're a Gold Wing fan then you need this T-shirt: 'Riding in Grand Style: Gold Wing – since 1974!' Created by none other than French artist BOD, his hilarious design perfectly illustrates the feeling of floating on a cloud at the handlebars of a Honda Gold Wing.

The high-quality black t-shirt with white print on the front comes in sizes M to 3XL and sells from €27.50. They also do a doormat! See the website for more…

***www.GoldWing.us***

### VENHILL OFF-ROAD CABLES

From: £17.82

Venhill has added a range of throttle and starter cable upgrades for popular Honda, Kawasaki and Yamaha off-road models.

Developed and manufactured in Venhill's UK factory, the new cables are carefully engineered to match OEM specifications. Extra length options are available to suit custom set ups, and they can be finished in a choice of colours.

Fitments include: Honda CRF150R, CRF250R and CRF450X, Kawasaki KX250F and KX450F and Yamaha YZ and WR models; YZ250F, YZ250FX, WR250F, YZ450F, YZ450FX and WR450F. Starter cables retail for £17.82 and twin throttle cables for £45.53 (including VAT)

***www.venhill.co.uk***

### LASER TOOLS CIRCLIP PLIER AND CRIMPER SET

£30.36

New from Laser Tools is this five-in-one Interchangeable Circlip Plier and Crimper Set (part number 9199), a workshop-ready 5-in-1 solution that replaces multiple separate pliers, saving space and money.

The set features straight and angled internal and external circlip heads plus a crimping plier head. The various heads swop in seconds and are stored in a compact plastic case that positions each head for fast, accurate fitting and removal.

***www.lasertools.co.uk/Product/9199***

£46.74

## MTR S-4 HELMET

A crash helmet for under 50 quid? You're joking, right? Well, no… Louis Moto has announced the MTR S-4 full face motorcycle helmet from exclusive brand MTR, available now in the UK via the Louis Moto website for just £46.74, down from around £86. So be quick…

Designed to the latest ECE 22.06 safety standard, the MTR S-4 has an Acrylonitrile-Butadiene-Styrene (ABS) outer shell engineered for impact resistance, a multi-density EPS liner, and a secure and simple ratchet closure system. It's even got a fully removable, washable interior lining made from moisture-wicking materials, generous ventilation channels, a clear, anti-scratch, and Pinlock-ready visor for maximum visibility, with a quick-release visor mechanism change.

It comes in gloss black, matt black and gloss white. Orders come from Europe with free delivery to the UK for orders over £199.

***https://www.louis-moto.co.uk/en/mtr-s-4-full-face-helmet-213877***

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£71.64

## LASER TOOLS COLOUR-CODED HEX SET

We like this! A comprehensive 27-piece extra-long Hex and Star key set (part number 9244) that gives technicians greater reach, visibility and access.

This set combines extra reach, ball-end access and a bright colour-coded finish so the right key is easy to find. The three separate sets (metric hex, imperial hex and Star/Torx) cover the fasteners you need and come supplied on neat plastic clips in an EVA foam tray sized to fit roll-cab drawers.

This set also gives you extra reach and access – long-series keys (90–220mm) get into deep or recessed fixings. Meanwhile, ball-end hex shafts give up to 30-degree off-axis access for awkward locations and colour-coding speed identification. Three tool families included: metric hex, imperial hex and Star/Torx for broad workshop coverage. For a precise breakdown of what's in the set, go to the website.

***www.lasertools.co.uk/Product/9244***

# BOOK CORNER

## STAN STEPHENS CLASSIC TWO-STROKE STORIES

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Former CMM contributor Stan Stephens here presents his third book, following on from his autobiography 'The Mechanic who got Lucky' and 'Classic Two-Stroke Engines'. This tome is basically a collection of features and stories that have featured Stan or a Stan-tuned bike over the last four or five decades or so. As such, it's a splendid, easy-to-reference book which helps explain why he's a tuning legend.

***https://www.dandybooksellers.com***

## XCP SALT REMOVER

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From: £9.99

We hate road salt, right? We know why it has to be there on the roads, on our food, and on 'things', but sometimes it's not good for us or our bikes!

This is a new Scottish-made salt-busting treatment from XCP which removes the harmful deposits that normal washing leaves behind. XCP Salt Remover tackles the hidden threat of salt corrosion that regular washing can't eliminate. The pH neutral solution removes salt deposits that would otherwise resin after rinsing, attract moisture and cause lasting damage. Available in spray and concentrate formats, it's the essential preparation for winter storage or ongoing protection during the riding season.

It's the smart first step in any winter maintenance routine – whether you're riding year-round or storing the bike until spring returns. Simply treat the relevant area directly with a uniform spray of the liquid. Allow the product to work for a few minutes and rinse thoroughly with water. XCP Salt Remover comes as a convenient spray or a concentrate (used at 5-15 per cent dilution) for larger applications. The one-litre spray bottle retails at £9.99 (Inc VAT) and a litre bottle of concentrate sells for £19.99 Including VAT.

***www.motohaus.com/collections/xcp***

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# cmm Tested

## Riding kit worn, tools twirled & tyres turned

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### ROADSKIN AUSTIN ARMOURED VEST

Vests often have nicer names (think 'cuts', 'gilets', etc.), but a 'vest' makes my wife think of that Onslow chap from 'Keeping Up Appearances'!

Thankfully, such designs are also popular with walkers, hikers and bikers. This is Roadskin's Austin Armoured Motorcycle Vest. Available in black or brown, the vest combines style, comfort and protection in a modern design and, having worn mine for a while now, it has proved to be the perfect companion on town runs and countryside rambles... and has caused quite a lot of attention at cafés, too. Oooh Mrs. Bucket! (Pronounced 'Bouquet'!)

The Austin features CE Level 2 Rheon back armour (included) and if you fancy it, you have the option to upgrade with CE Level 1 Rheon chest armour, with full protection against impact and abrasion. You also have double-stitched seams, quilted shoulder yoke, plus an innovative blend of 98 per cent cotton and two per cent spandex. The vest comes lined with 60 per cent Kevlar and 40 per cent polyester so there's the durability and protection you are wanting. It also boasts a breathable light mesh lining.

Storage is good: front patch pockets, interior compartments which are handy for essentials such as phone and wallet, and additional welt pockets. The Austin is available in sizes M to XXXL, and as I say, is available in either brown or black. If you want a roomier fit over other clothing, go a size up. This is a top value product.

***Mike Cowton***

**www.roadskin.co.uk**

---

### NEXX X.WST3 HELMET

NEXX helmets: the name is new to me, as it might be to you, but I can tell you that they've been made in Portugal since 2001.

The X.WST3 is available with a choice of two lightweight shells: the X-PRO 3K Carbon Fibre and a Multi-Composite Fibre option, made with NEXX's own X-MATRIX2 material. Both versions are ECE22.06 certified and come in three outer shell sizes for the closest fit across each size range.

I was immediately impressed by the wide field of view through the visor and in particular across the brow. There was no need to tilt my head up to optimise vision. I was also taken with the lightness and comfort levels, aided by the fact that the X.WST3 features the brand's own Anti-Vibration EPS system, whereby a flexible rubber layer is sandwiched between the inner and outer EPS in order to absorb the intrusive vibrations and buzzing caused by air turbulence at higher speeds. In addition, both the 3X Carbon and X-MATRIX2 shells feature aerodynamic shaping, plus a drag-reducing rear spoiler, to keep the head stable and reduce pressure on the neck, something I have been prone to in the past.

The visor comes with an excellent seal closure system, and a Pinlock Anti-Fog system as standard. The helmet does come with a drop-down sun visor, operated to the left of the helmet. There are easily adjustable ventilation ports to the front and rear, and airflow also can be adjusted across the top, with a fresh air chamber between the EPS liner and the padding providing a cooling flow of air as and when the temperature rises. It also has a double-D lock strap.

The X.WST3 comes ready to accept X-COM3 Bluetooth 5.0 comms, accessible from the left-hand side. Both the X-COM3 standard and X-COM3 Pro – with 2.0 Mesh Technology, and sound by Harman Kardon – will fit straight in. On the right-hand side is a removable side mount, for easy attachment of an action camera.

NEXX
NEXX
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NEXX

From £329.99- £429.99

So, they tick boxes. The overall peripheral vision is spot on, being both wide and tall, and with the helmet's lightness, there is minimal neck fatigue. It's reasonably quiet, and very comfortable, with excellent aerodynamics, and at a good price point. The only minus is the chin curtain, which, after clipping in place, fell off every time I slid the helmet on. I understand that NEXX are aware of this issue and have been busy addressing the fault.

The X.WST3 X-MATRIX2 models retail at £329.99 in plain mono colour options and £349.99 in four eye-catching Fluence graphic styles. The 3X Carbon Zero Pro comes in a solid carbon finish and sells for £429.99. All three are available in sizes XXS-3XL. Zero Pro and Fluence models come with an additional tinted visor and visor bag.

***Mike Cowton***

**https://nexx-helmet.co.uk/**

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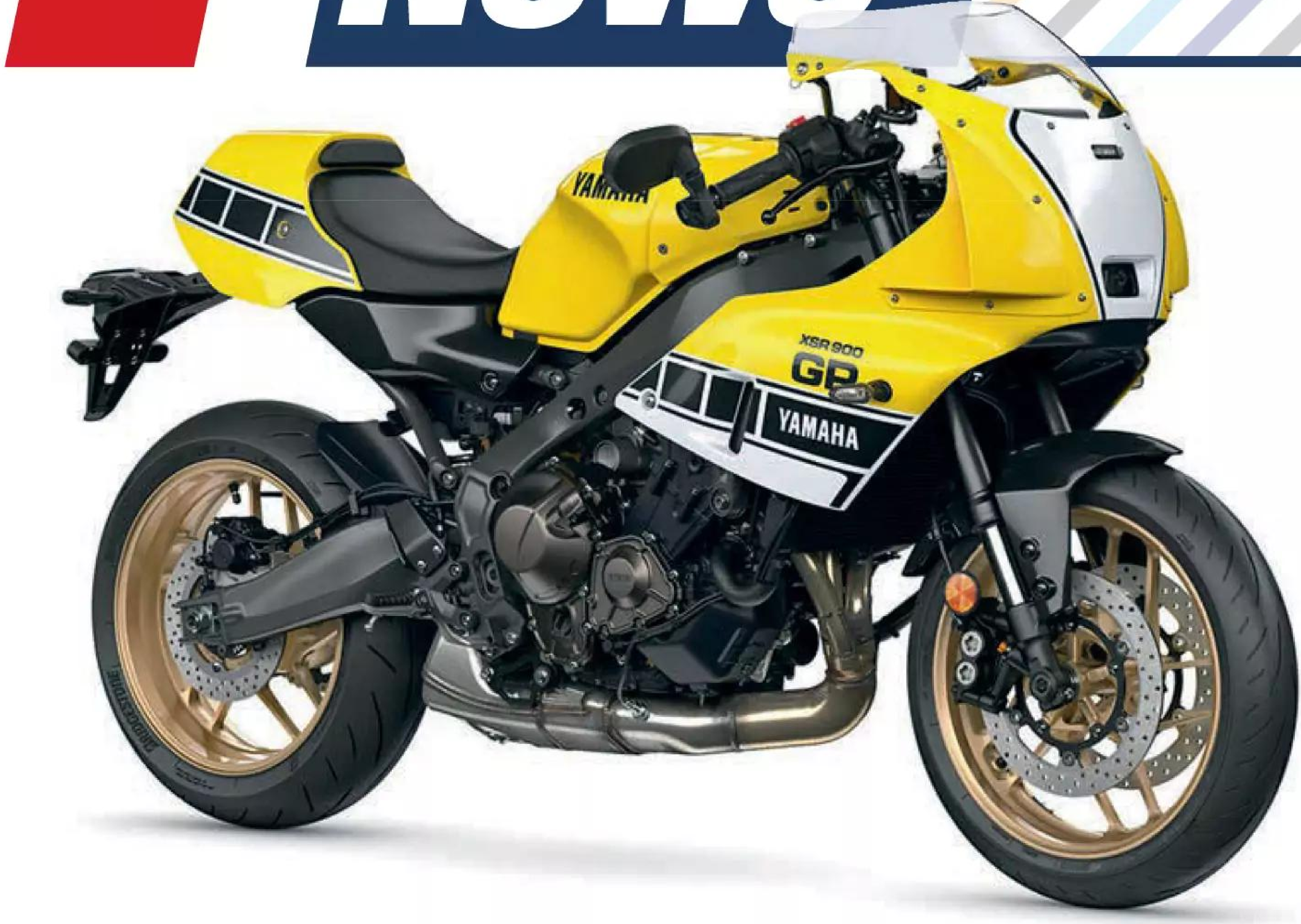

# CELEBRATE THE KING!

We think Yamaha are on to a winner here with their Sport Heritage range and this new colourway for the XSR900 GP.

This bike comes with the three-cylinder crossplane crank engine laden with torque with a chassis to handle it and a design harking back to the likes of the YZR500 two-stroke grand prix machines as well as the likes of the OW-01 and YZF750s... Well, joining their 'Marlboro red-a-like' Legend Red will be this colour scheme.

Yup, it's effectively a Kenny Roberts rep Yamaha Speedblock in yellow. And we love it. Called the 'Legend Yellow', it celebrates 'King' Kenny Roberts' 13 years with the brand.

America's first world champion, Kenny took back-to-back titles in 500cc from 1978-1980 and later took charge of their grand prix race team, helping John Kocinski to his 1990 250cc title and Wayne Rainey's trio of titles in 1990-1992.

No idea on price as yet, but the current model sits at around £12,500-£12,800. Expect a raft of accessories and packs, such as those seen on the current model. That means you'll be able to go for a full-fairing and get a saucy end can on it. Oh, and matching leisure and riding kit, too! **https://www.yamaha-motor.eu/gb/en/motorcycles/sport-heritage/pdp/xsr900-gp-2026/**

# HEAD TO THE WINTER CLASSIC!

Classic motorcycle fans are in for a treat this January as television presenter and motorcycle enthusiast Henry Cole takes centre stage at the Classic Bike Guide Winter Classic Show, held at Newark Showground on 10-11 January, 2026.

Henry is best known for hosting World's Greatest Motorcycle Rides, The Motorbike Show, Shed and Buried, and Find It, Fix It, Flog It.

Henry's passion for motorcycles shines through his work with Gladstone Motorcycles, where he creates bespoke, handbuilt machines that marry heritage and performance. He has also made his mark on the Bonneville Salt Flats, setting a land speed record for the Brough Superior in 2013 and riding in the world's fastest two-up attempt with Allen Millyard.

Visitors can catch Henry live on stage with compere Steve Plater and at the fire-up area in the Stanley Sheldon Hall, where he will share stories from his career, insights into restoration and behind-the-scenes tales from the world of television. So, get advanced tickets at: **www.classicbikeshows.com**

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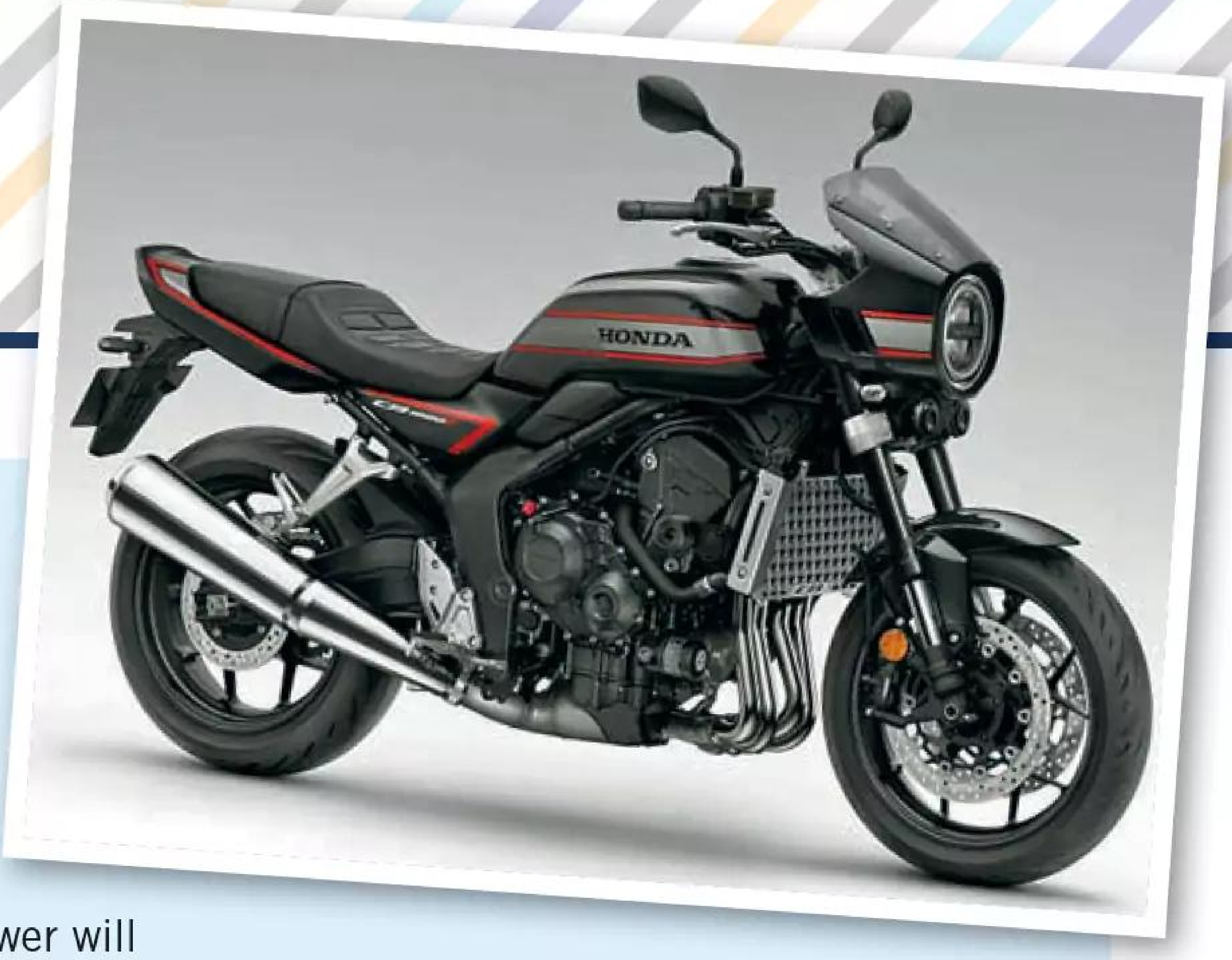


# NEW HONDA CB1000F!

Oh yes… look at this. Honda has dived into the retro scene with all guns blazing.

This beauty is based on the CB1000 Hornet, so it uses a detuned version of the CBR1000RR Fireblade motor, but this will still push out around 120bhp. Torque and power will also be available lower in the rev-range than that seen on the Hornet and the gearbox ratios changed as a result.

The frame is pretty much the same but (get this) the sub-frame is longer so that Honda can fit a 'proper' longer seat, with decent pillion provision. At last, someone has heard us! It's the same Hornet thou' running gear: ABS; Nissin radial four-pots; 120/70-17 front and a 180 rear; around 214 kilos. But the looks… Oh, the looks!

That is where Honda have scored a slam-dunk: straight out of the CB750/900F playbook – look at the silver with blue decals. Wow! Apparently, lots of accessories are on the way, too, including stuff to make this a tourer. We don't doubt there will be lots of sexy stuff coming (a nose cowl is an option already) and if there's not some sort of Bol d'Or or Freddie Spencer replica version in the works, you can call me Susan.

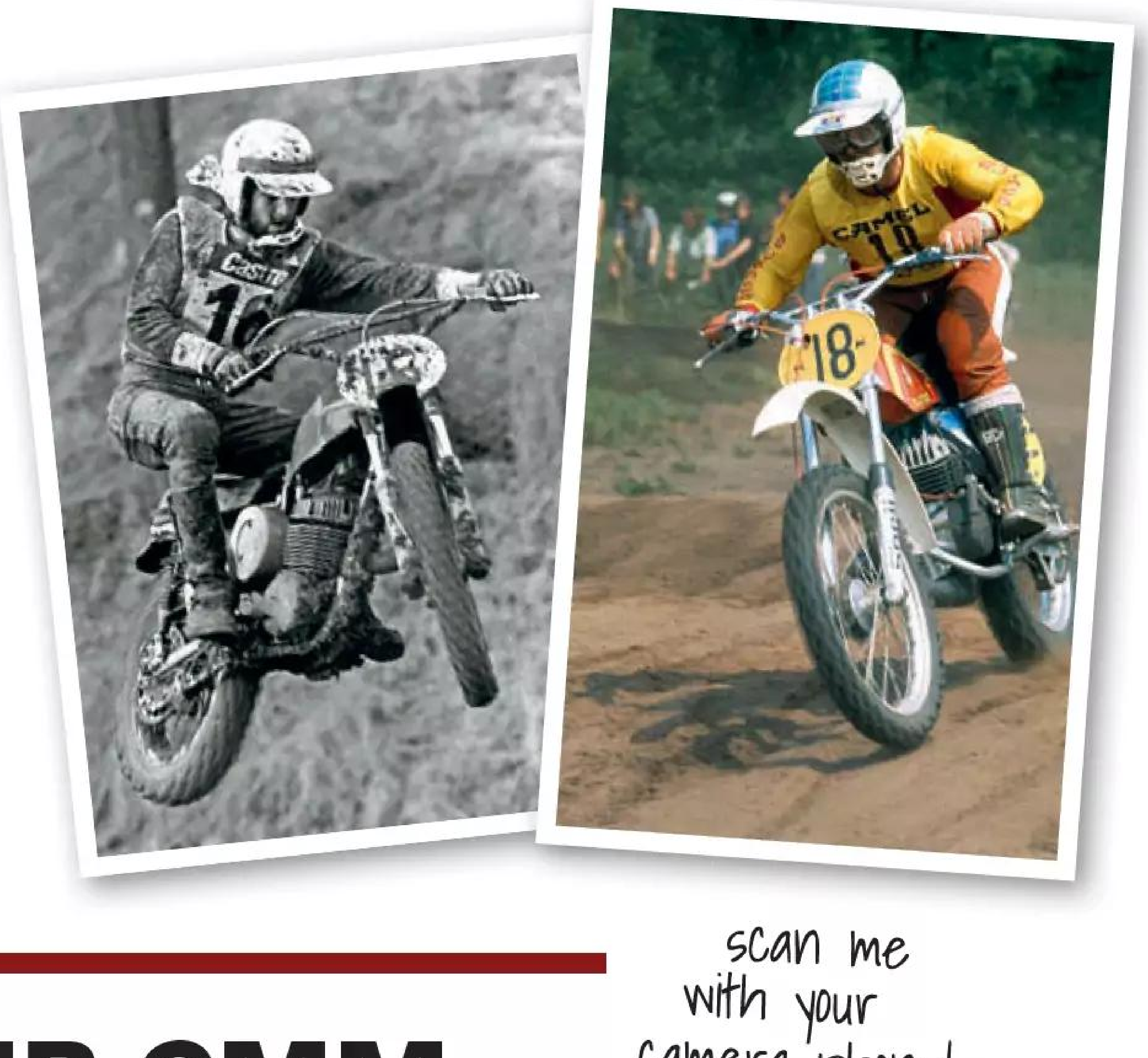
The price is expected to be around £10,599 which undercuts the Kawasaki Z900RS by about a grand. We can't wait to give it a go. For more, go to: **https://www.honda.co.uk**

## CLASSIC DIRT BIKE SHOW IS GO!

Three huge names in the off-road scene have been confirmed for The Classic Dirt Bike Show, taking place on 7-8 February, 2026, at the Telford International Centre.

Known for attracting some of the biggest names in the industry, next year's show is set to be no exception. Vic Allan has been announced as the first guest of honour. Vic was crowned double British MX Champion in the 250cc and 500cc classes in 1974, the only rider ever to achieve this remarkable double.

Joining him will be Roger Harvey, who will share stories from a racing career spanning nearly two decades. A former 1983 British 125cc champion, Roger is a true motocross veteran who went on to lead Honda's motocross programme and now serves as an advisor for Honda HRC. Also on stage throughout the weekend will be Sammy Miller, 11-time British Trials Champion and two-time European Trials Champion. For more go to: **www.classicbikeshows.com**



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# STAFFORD WAS SUPER!

If you missed the Carole Nash Classic Motorcycle Mechanics Show at Stafford in October, you missed a treat!

Classic fans of road and race machines descended on the Stafford County Showground to see some fantastic bikes and hear top stories from our special guests Wayne Gardner and Roger Marshall. Wayne, the 1987 500cc World Champ, and his old mate Rog (a multiple British champ) kept the crowds entertained with brilliant stories from their time racing together. Wayne even celebrated his birthday with us all on the Saturday.

Winners at the show included: Best pre-1960s bike – 1938 CZ25B owned by Bob Clark; Best 1960s bike – 1965 Yamaha YDS3C, Colin Day; Best 1970s bike was a 1979 Phil Read replica Honda owned by Richard Holmes; Best 1980s was Keith Felstead's 1984 Kawasaki Z1300; and the best 1990s bike was Tom Becket's 1999 Ducati 748 SPS.

Other winners were Kevin Hunter's 2010 Suzuki B-King Turbo; a 1987 Kawasaki KMX125 (best Jap bike) owned by Steve Valentine; while Best in Show was Paul Cann's 1967 Kawasaki A7 Avenger. Heck, even our own Vic Shield took a pot home with this 1972 Triumph custom special…

And we also raised £320 for auctioning off Wayne Gardner's hat for the British Heart Foundation.

Keep an eye out for next year's event at: **www.classicbikeshows.com**

# selected events

## NOVEMBER

**19** **CLASSIC MOTORCYCLE MECHANICS ON SALE**

**21** **Bike Night**
The Ace Cafe London, Ace Corner, North Circular Road, Stonebridge, London NW10 7UD:
www.london.acecafe.com

**22** **Squires Café Autojumble**
Squires Cafe Bar, Newthorpe Lane, Newthorpe, Leeds, West Yorkshire LS25 5LX:
www.squires-café.co.uk

**23** **Huddersfield Autojumble**
The Old Market Building, Brook Street, Huddersfield, West Yorkshire HD1 1RG:
www.phoenixfairs.jimdo.com

**23** **Ariel Owners Club and Classic Bike Day**
Ace Cafe London:
www.london.acecafe.com

**26** **CLASSIC BIKE GUIDE OUT**

**27** **Harley-Davidson Night,**
Ace Cafe London:
www.london.acecafe.com

**30** **Bideford Bike Show's Christmas Toy Run**
Leaving from Bideford Quay Car Park, Bideford, Devon EX39 2HW at 11am:
www.bidefordbikeshow.org

## DECEMBER

**1** **German Night**
The Ace Cafe London:
www.london.acecafe.com

**5** **THE CLASSIC MOTORCYCLE ON SALE**

**5-7** **Shuttleworth in Lights**
The Shuttleworth Collection, Old Warden Aerodrome, Biggleswade, Bedfordshire SH18 9EP:
www.shuttleworth.org

**6** **OLD BIKE MART WITH YOU TODAY**

**6** **Kempton Classic Bike Show & Autojumble**
Kempton Park Racecourse, Staines Road E, Sunbury-on-Thames, Surrey TW16 5AQ:
www.kemptonautojumble.co.uk

**6** **Rufforth Autojumble**
Rufforth Park, Wetherby Road, Rufforth, North Yorkshire YO23 3QH:
www.rufforthautojumble.com

**7** **Bike Day and Ace Cafe Club Christmas Meet**
Ace Cafe London:
www.london.acecafe.com

**14** **Christmas Toy Run**
Leaving from the Ace Cafe London:
www.london.acecafe.com.

**16** **VMCC South Dorset's Breakfast Meet**
The Three Compasses, Charminster, Dorset DT2 9QT. Tel: 01935 83242.
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We love to hear from you, so why not let us know what you like, or dislike, in YOUR magazine. Simply get in touch by sending emails to: letters@classicmechanics.com or direct to the editor at BSimmonds@Mortons.co.uk or post your letters to the normal address.

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## Appreciative reader

**Star Letter**

Thank you all for what is a truly inspiring magazine that I look forward to receiving each month.

As a novice motorcycle restorer the successive issues have taught me plenty, starting from first principles with basic maintenance and now with my first venture into the world of motorcycle restoration where an unexpecting victim is awaiting my attention in the shed. Keeping a library of back issues has helped to construct a series of technical references that I can turn to when my limited knowledge and steam run out, but most of all I really enjoy the differing writing styles of your contributors.

Your magazine also has helped to assemble a decent horde of tools and other gizmos to make the job that little bit easier thanks to tool wizard Ralph Ferrand. Andy Bolas is the down-to-earth, no-nonsense type of guy who knows his onions and calls it as it is. Andy's honesty is refreshing. Steve Cooper's detailed reviews of the metal steeds that he trials paints a different prospective, where before I would not have considered the specific characteristics of some of the motorcycles that pass beneath his butt cheeks, especially the tiddlers.

I take my hat off to the legendary Pip Higham as the things he has or hasn't done and what he has achieved in his lifetime is amazing. Pip's sense of humour is apparent in every piece that he writes, often raising a chuckle, what a guy, and how I would love to share a pint or three exchanging stories.

Being a fellow ex-pat now living in France, due to the appalling state of British roads amongst other things, I love to read Kev Raymond's Bay-Watch section as for me this is a particular highlight of the magazine and has taught me so much.

When choosing my first project, I remembered some of the hints and tips Kev had delivered along the way to help in weeding out the wheat from the chaff. Deciphering the sellers' description is a masterpiece of journalism including outing the lazy buggers that over-rely on AI. Merci beaucoup Kev, you are a star.

Keep up the good work guys as I am sure there are many like myself who really appreciate your efforts and knowledgeable insight: long may you reign!

***Mike Cowburn***

**Bertie says:** *"Thanks Mike – letters like this make it all worthwhile!"*

## Short seats!

Aha! Finally, someone has the same view of the majority of street bikes of recent times that I do! Thank you, Bertie Simmonds for waxing lyrical about the current, and not so current design of motorcycles and their almost sadistic lack of bum-room for pillion passengers.

Modern motorcycle designers also seem to have run out of styling ideas from the fuel tank backwards; vast swathes of identikit machinery resembling two-wheeled versions of Buzz Lightyear, all bulk and show up front, tailing off to nothing at the back. Is the most important element of looking good on your bike (and we are all guilty of that) the view from the front and first quarters, and sod what's behind me?

Well, at the risk of giving my age away I hark back to the 1970s and thereabouts, when bikes had some sort of tail piece (somewhere to hide your emergency over-trousers) and looked complete from end to end. Maybe this explains the rise and rise of interest in classic and 'neo-classic' machines these days. Anyone else of a like mind?

***Steve Dallen***

**Bertie says:** *"Right on brother! One thing – maybe Honda has listened with the new CB1000F?"*

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SEE PAGE 52 FOR DETAILS

## Bums on seats!

I cannot agree with Bertie more regarding your editorial in the latest issue of CMM. What is it with today's design culture of no rear-end on a motorcycle with scaffolding attached to the swingarm to attach the number plate and rear light assemblies. It looks horrendous.

At least Honda with their new CB1000F/900F replica have added a proper rear-end to the bike. Imagine how many more machines Suzuki would have sold if they had managed to do this with the hideous creation they designed with a short back end called a Katana 'modern classic'. It really isn't difficult and is a real bugbear of mine and lots of my biking mates, too. Great magazine, thanks for a brilliant read every month!

**Martin Macqueen**

**Bertie says:** *"Thanks for this Martin! I'm also hopeful that the Honda has more back-end… Looks that way."*

## Multi-bike magic?

Hello from California! I just wanted to drop you a line to let you know that I really enjoy your magazine. Your most entertaining contributor has to be Pip Higham, although I also like reading Bay-Watch and Ralph Ferrand's articles.

Improvements? Well, if you could do more head-to-head test rides of classic bikes (i.e. GT380 v RD400 v CB400F, etc.) those are always welcome. I do understand the challenges involved in lining up three or four classic bikes on a day when the sun is shining so this would be a once-in-a-while request! Keep up the good work and don't let the naysayers get you down!

**Grant Trillwood**

**Bertie says:** *"Thanks for this Grant! We will try for multi-bike tests in the spring-time. It does cost rather a lot more though…"*

## Paper chase?

I was just about okay with the change to staples from a bound spine, but this latest paper change is terrible! It's like cheap bog paper. I know you have to cut costs, but really this low-quality paper is bad. The photos look terrible. There's probably nothing you can do, but I wanted to let you know.

Also, the classified section is a mess. Slightly better this month, but definitely a step backwards.

Sorry for the moaning but something more positive: how about using my VFR750 write-up? This has appeared in Tansha (VJMC). What do you think?

**Dean Faria**

**Bertie says:** *"Sir! Yes, moving from perfect-bound made it more difficult for me to see what was in older issues. And the 'new' paper isn't as good – but as you say, it's about saving money! Sorry you don't like the new classifieds, I only cover editorial. However, YES, we'd love to cover your 1995 VFR!"*

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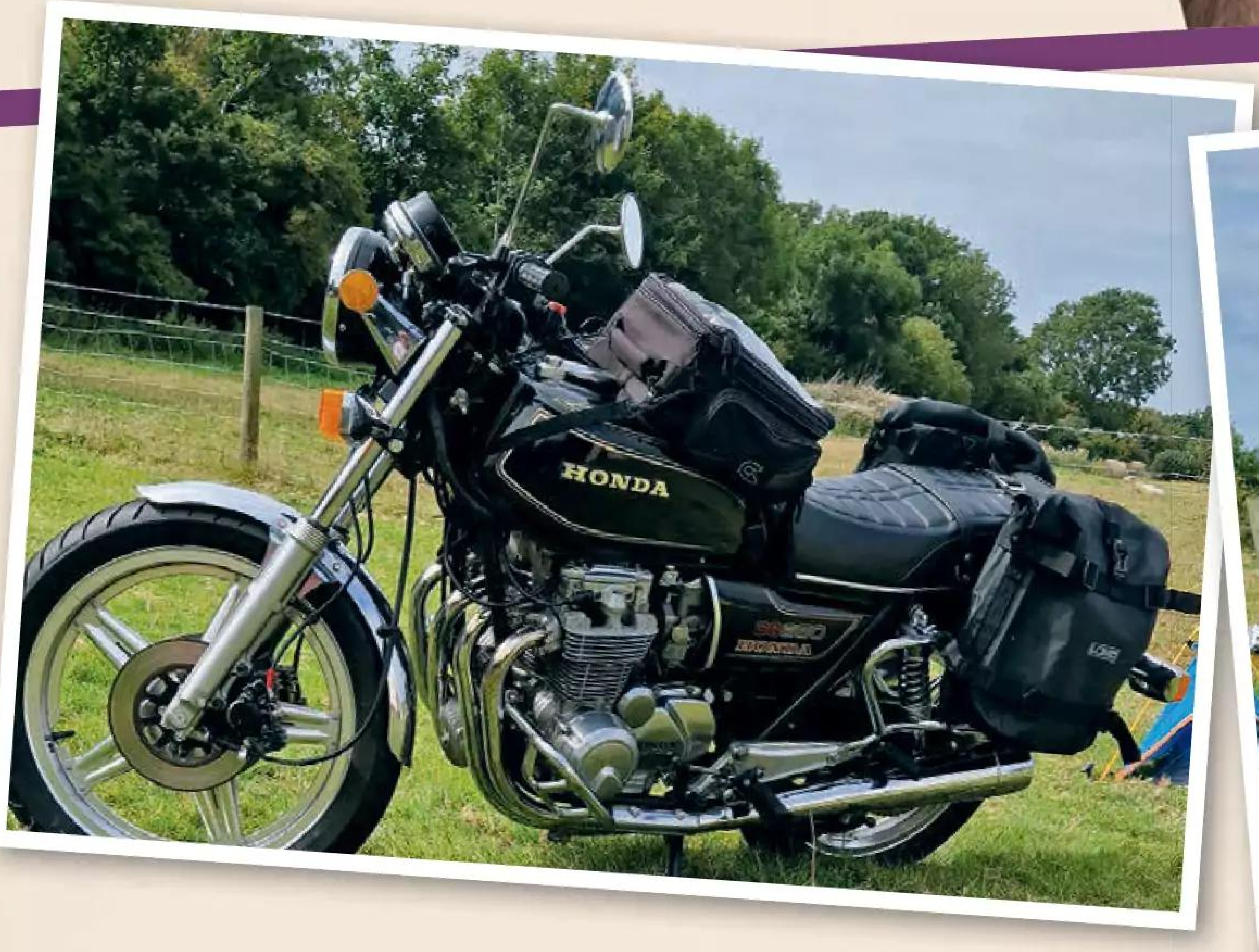


## MALCOLM RICE'S HONDA CB650Z

Well, I purchased the bike off eBay and yes, the pictures from the listing didn't match the bike, but I still came home with it. I'd had one of these lovely bikes back in 1979 and of all the Honda fours that I owned back in the day, this was my favourite.

I spent over a year and lots of money trying to restore the bike to standard and I think that I've made a decent job. I've been quite lucky finding all the standard parts: the chrome and the paint do show their age but it still looks quite presentable. I do need a pillion grab rail, should anyone have one going spare! I decided not to go for concours, it would be too shiny and I'd keep it garaged and be reluctant to use it, so here we are. The photos are from my trip to the Isle of Man for this year's Manx GP.

## BEN SAVILLE'S KAWASAKIS

My 1990 KDX200 has had a full ground-up rebuild. The 1994 Kawasaki ZX-9R Ninja was sitting in a shed for around 12 years and was totally standard besides the tinted screen. I managed to score the Termignoni slip-on can off a Kawasaki forum.

## TIM PYKETT'S COLLECTION

I thought I'd send you a pic of our bikes from the oldest (a 1981 Suzuki GS650 Katana); a 1991 Suzuki DR350 with a 1994 electric-start engine; a Suzuki GSXS1000 2017; and my daughter's 2019 Honda CMX500 2019. The newer bikes are our regular rides. I hope you like them!

## CHARLES FERGUSON'S KAWASAKI Z1300

Back in 1979 I bought one of the first American KZ1300s that arrived in South Africa and that's when the love affair began. Since then, I've never been without at least one Z13. I've had five and enjoyed them all, but this is my favourite.

It's a 1981 European Z13, originally jade green and I became the third owner when I purchased it in 1987 from the seller, who was totally intimidated by it. Since then, it's been through various life phases, culminating in its current status of semi-retirement.

My passion for bikes began in 1969, initially with Brit bikes and progressing to Japanese in the late 1970s, and having owned over 50 bikes since then, of them all the Z13 is the one that stands out. The combination of smoothness, power delivery, handling, reliability, rider and pillion comfort for touring (provided a fairing is fitted) and, last but not least, that magnificent symphony of sound that surpasses all others, culminates in a riding experience second-to-none; what an absolute treat. The only possible negative is the lack of stopping power due to its weight if ridden in a spirited fashion, especially in an urban environment or if used for a track day.

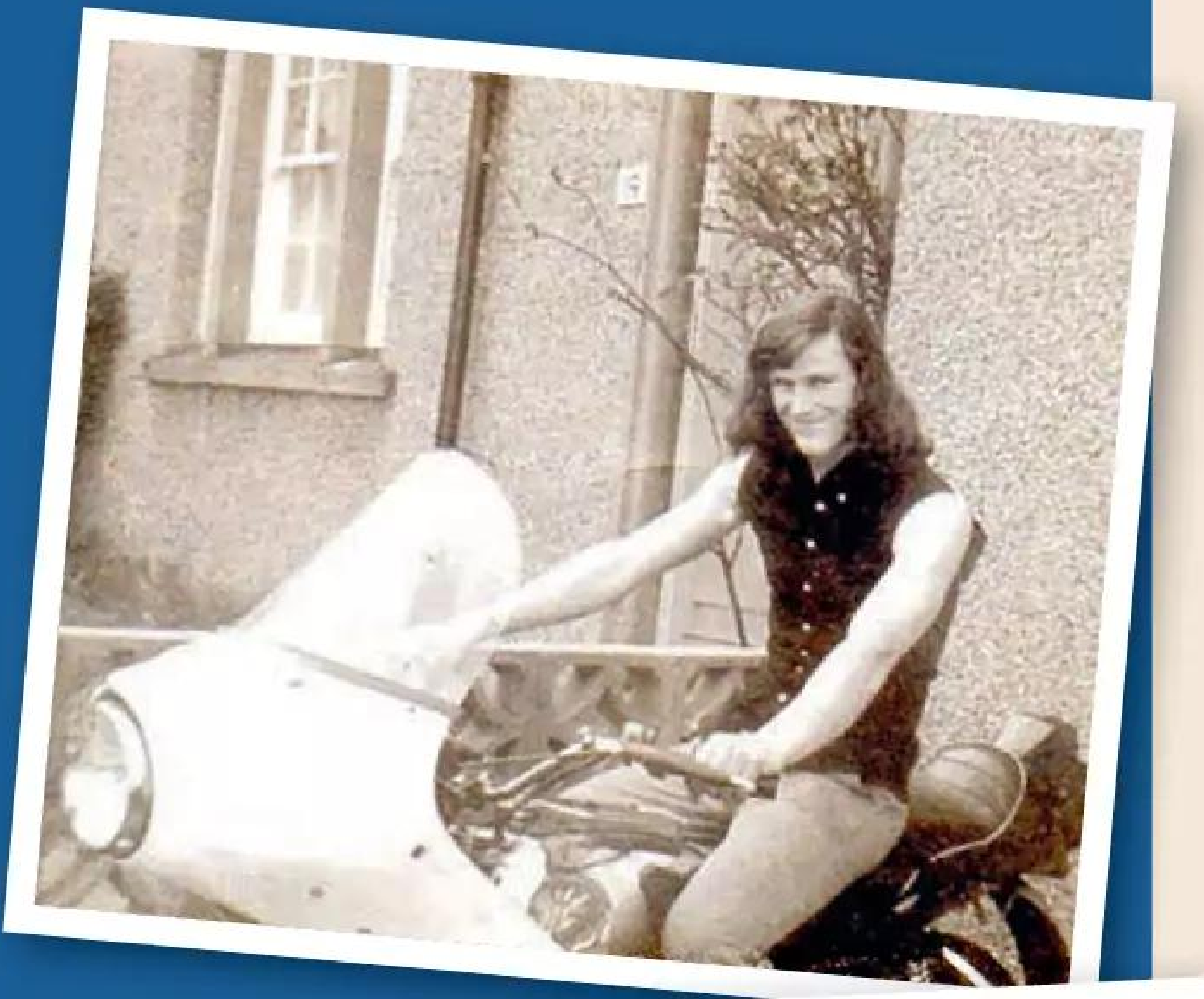
What an amazing motorcycle; Kawasaki surely created an icon with the Z13. Beyond merely its gorgeous smooth six-cylinder, water-cooled motor, it's much more than the sum of its parts.

## MIKE CHETTER'S COLLECTION

Here's what's in the shed at the moment. My April 1996 registered, one previous owner Triumph Trident 750 that I bought from Woods of Abergele in 2008. On reshimming valve clearances I found 'Dec 94' engraved on one of the camshaft caps. Triumph Owners Club tell me it was built Jan 1995 then sold to Woods in January 1996. It was on display at the CMM show at Stafford in October 2022 as a future affordable classic. I love this bike but, at 77, I've downsized to the Benelli 125. Horsepower drop is a bit of a shock, so I might need a rethink!

# The way we were...

*Send us your nostalgic snaps of you back in the day with your steed! Either send to me at bsimmonds@mortons.co.uk or via our vibrant Facebook page. C'mon, we'll send you a T-shirt if you are our first pick!*



**Brian Stuart says**: "You hear a lot of talk about the evolution of motorcycles but nothing about the evolution of motorcyclists.

I started my riding adventure after my big brother Mike took me to see a film called Easy Rider in 1969, and I fell in love with motorcycles; to this day I still have the DVD and a poster on my garage wall. Having a big brother and cousin who were just a bit older than me and lads across the road who were into Triumph 3TA and Tiger Cubs, I had a great start to motorcycling. I would often be taken on the back of my brother's Vespa and my cousin's Yamaha. I was introduced to lager and lime aged 15 on many trips on the back to pubs!

My brother bought a new Kawasaki 250 triple and my cousin a Triumph Trail Blazer 250, so more pillion fun until I was 16 and my Dad bought me a new Vespa/Piaggio Ciao moped; I would ride it all over Edinburgh singing 'Born to be Wild'. Many bikes came and went including this BSA 650; just look at my hair! Later, I saw a new Kawasaki KH 400 triple and I fell in love. £500 new, with a payment book for 36 months!

Marriage and kids came and bikes were used to travel to work (Norton Navigator 350, Kawasaki Z250 four-stroke, and a Honda CD 175). Then I bought an old Honda Gold Wing 1100 which was not in very good condition. Again my brother came to the rescue and swapped it for his fantastic Kawasaki Z1300 six, which I took on a charity trip to the Chernobyl nuclear plant in 1990.

A sports bike came next (Yamaha FZ750) and I started going to the BMF Rally and European events like the Le Mans and Bol d'Or endurance races. The Z13 was great for longer trips but I also bought a Gold Wing 1200 (it kept burning out alternators) then a BMW.

Then I bought a new BMW K1200 LT Lux and I had 10 years of fun, but it had a major problem with the rear wheel bearing overheating. By now I'd bought a place in central France and was travelling from Newcastle there – stopping only for fuel and the ferry! I went through five wheel bearings though!

Then came a Harley Sportster and a trailer for the Gold Wing. Then I moved to Poland from which I rode to The Farmyard Rally in the north of England, via the Hook of Holland. Funny, I lived in the north of England for 20 years and never went to it! During that trip I was cold and wet and was passed by a Can-Am Spyder; the people on it looked at me with pity! So, In February I bought one myself!

Yes, it's got three wheels but it's great fun to ride and more people have them; it's an age thing!"

**Clive Lewis says:** "Here are a couple of pictures when I was a student in 1979/1980. The DT175 was bought from new from Windmill Motors in Kettering. It was a great bike used on and off-road. The move to Leeds (university) meant I needed something bigger and a mate (Kwak) was selling this lovely RD250 to buy a KH. I had the RD250 for six years and yes, I wish I hadn't sold it!"

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**Strangely, and despite their reputation, I've never had much of a 'thing' for big Kawasaki four-strokes in general.**

Yes, okay, I did nearly trip over my own tongue at 18 when I saw my first Z1 – a French one in candy yellow and green – and I'm a quiet fan of the hugely underrated 1970s Z650 but other than that no, not really. Don't misinterpret that as anything spiteful, rather it's simply that big fours have never really done much for me.

Then again, I wasn't really much fussed about UJMs (Universal Japanese Motorcycles) in general until I rode a Suzuki GSX750 for CMM the other year. That bike piqued my interest and now I've been offered a chance to ride Ian Bird's extremely tidy, low mileage, GPz750 twin shock.

During my initial forays into bikes, when the likes of the above mentioned machines were new, they were always beyond my weekly wage but now they are unbelievably accessible from a fiscal perspective. Therefore, it'd be downright rude to pass up the opportunity to sample another ubiquitous UJM, wouldn't it?

Sitting with an air of menace is our subject matter this month: a GPz750 which to some eyes might look a little unfamiliar. For most, a GPz750 should have a full fairing, a tank that swoops elegantly into the side-panels that, in turn, morph into the tail-piece. Oh, and where's the much-lauded Uni-Trak suspension as well, please?

Sorry to disappoint and all that but our bike in camera is a first-year 1982 model which means it came out of the factory with a bikini fairing and a pair of conventional rear shock absorbers. Styling-wise, it's essentially similar in profile (if not capacity) to Eddie Lawson's winning AMA

Kawasaki
GPz750
A.F.W.
Kawasaki
Kawasaki

# COOL KWAK!

Scoop samples a Kawasaki UJM in the form of the Kawasaki GPz750 and takes a real shine to it.

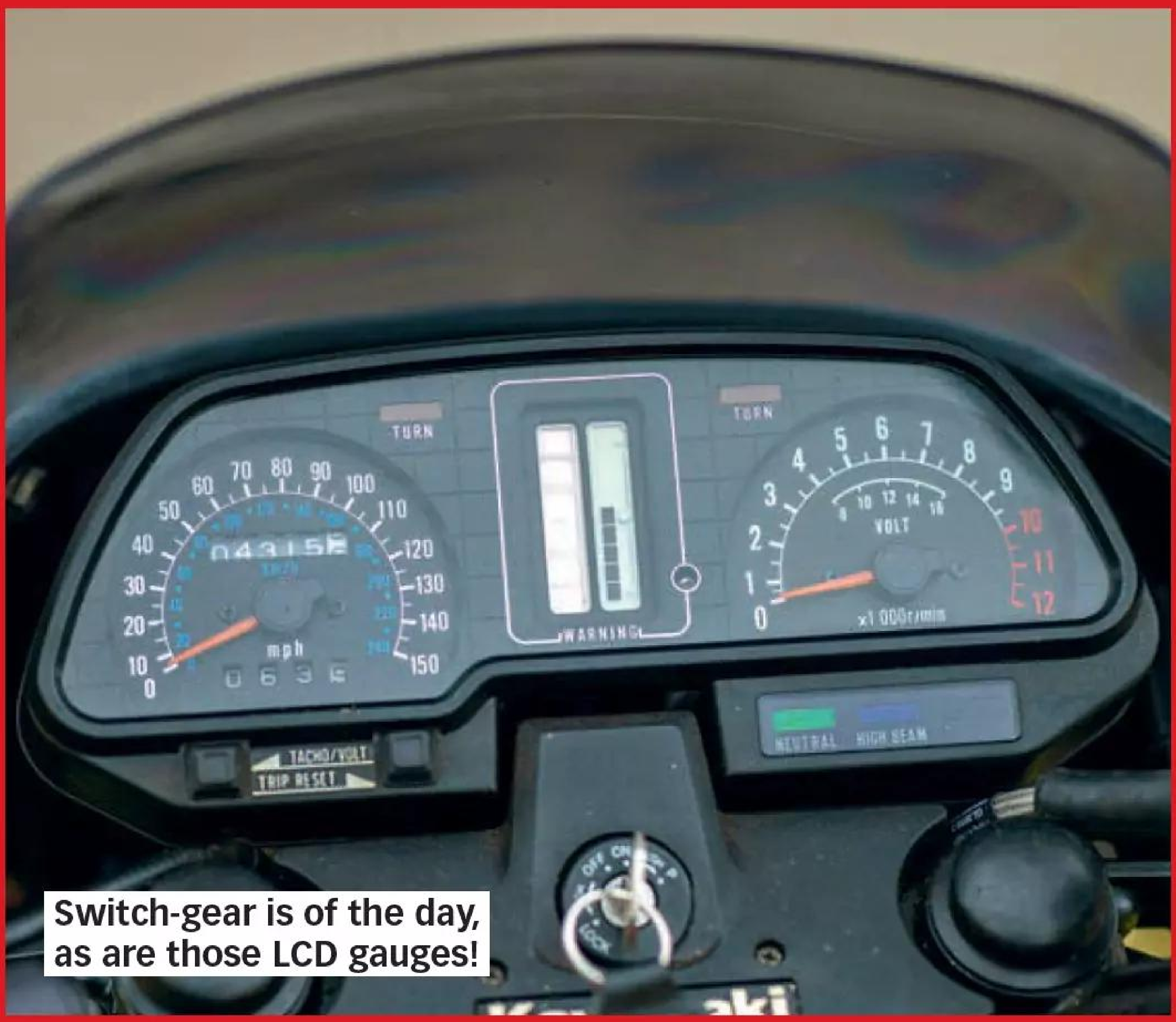
WORDS: **STEVE COOPER** PICS: **GARY CHAPMAN, MORTONS ARCHIVE**

Superbikes but in Firecracker Red. When new the Gee Pee Zee 750, as our American friends say, would have looked dramatically different from the big Zeds that had preceded it but in reality, what we have here is a Z750L given a considered workover.

Pitched at the performance end of the three-quarter litre spectrum, taper roller bearings ousted the old-school cup-and-ball set up in the steering head for more assured handling, and new top yoke facilitated the fitment of cast alloy clip-on handlebars.

With a bikini fairing seemingly borrowed from the similarly-styled GPz550, a new set of instruments gave the bike a more modern 1980s look. Down in the engine room the camshafts had received a reprofiling job; a squish zone aimed at extracting more power had been machined into the combustion chamber; and the Mikuni carbs had grown from 32 to 36 millimetres. Combined, this little lot added some four horses and two more ft-lb of torque to the mill, according to the figures issued at the time.

Keeping all of this in check were an oil-cooler which helped to chill down the lubricant that now found its way on to the undersides of the piston crowns in an attempt to stop detonation, reduce piston temperatures and improve lubrication. Strangely, and according to the factory brochures of the time, the GPz750 also managed to gain around



Switch-gear is of the day, as are those LCD gauges!

OFF
ENGINE STOP
OFF RUN OFF

ON
OFF
L TURN R
HORN PASS

## Meet the family

**Model multiplicity is good for business – fact! As a manufacturer you can take a basic chassis/engine combination as your starting point then tweak, revise, update and change to your heart's content.**

**Within limitations a lot is possible for minimum outlay; it's something the car industry has done so successfully for decades. And sometimes you can take a pre-existing design, then develop it into a new vehicle... which is precisely what Kawasaki did with the entire 750/4 series.**

**Kawasaki's Z750E (KZ750 in the USA) hit the streets in 1981 as a heavily revised version of the hugely successful Z/KZ650 first seen in late 1976. The 650 had broken the mould of the Z1/Z900 by adopting a plain bearing crank and revised top-end; these and numerous other changes made the 650 easier and cheaper to produce.**

**The ensuing 750/4 range was based around the 650 motor that had been subjected to an over-bore and weight loss programme delivering the KZ750E. Subsequent changes would see the basic blueprint morph into the GPz750 as seen here, along with the shaft drive GT750 that became a favourite within the 80s dispatch rider/courier sub-culture.**

**The bike reached its zenith with the turbo version variously referred to as the Kawasaki GPz750 Turbo, ZX750E, GPzx1 750T or 750 Turbo, depending upon the market and publicity blurb. For Kawasaki at least the days for the air-cooled four were waning and in 1984 the future was writ large with the arrival of the all-new, liquid-cooled GPZ900R. The old king was dead, long live the new one... well not quite.**

**Kawasaki would go on to resurrect the concept with the retro Zephyr series of the early 90s (400/550/750/1100) that visually mimicked the original Z1 but ran the Z650-inspired power units. The 750 Zephyr owed much to the old Z750 range and would later be reborn once more as the ZR7. Lasting until 2004, the final version of what began as the 1976 Z650 had done its designers proud.**

**BELOW:** Is that a smile beneath that full-face lid and top lip tash?

five kilos as part of the upgrade… unless, of course, someone forgot to recalibrate the weighing scales!

When it comes to the visuals, the memorandum to the design teams must have been along the lines of: '…if it's not painted red then make it black!' Fortunately, after all the warranty issues of the original 72/73 Z1s where the satin black paint lifted off the motors, Kawasaki had found a workaround and the paint bonded properly to the bare alloy. With black being the perfect counterpoint to the vibrant red of the paintwork, it even extends to the exhaust system which is finished in black chrome.

Bare silver is at a minimum here with just the discs, wheels and forks glinting in the summer sun. Up in what's effectively a cockpit there's satin black wherever you look, together with crisp white legends, orange needles, an array of idiot lights and a then hugely modern LCD fuel level display.

Turn the key and the central panel does a check sequence procedure which was again radical for the period. The bike fires up on the button but does the usual Kawasaki thing where it wants to rev itself to death or plays silly sods refusing to idle properly. Given how prolific this issue was, it really does make you wonder why it plagued so many

Kawasaki
AWD 193Y
GPz750
A.F.W.
Kawasaki
AVON

Kawasaki models when every other manufacturers' bikes of the period just got on the job and didn't apparently want to self-destruct.

Having previously sampled Ian's GPz1100, I was expecting something similar to it (but with less power) and hopefully reduced mass and bulk. And to a point that's kind of what you get but with huge qualification: the 750 is just so much easier to ride.

Some bikes you sample are emphatically better than just okay, but somehow you don't feel at one with them. And a small handful are ineffably peculiar but for no reason you can easily put a finger on. Yet here on the twin-shock GPz750 everything feels unequivocally 'just right'. My notes of the day make no references to me having any issues with the bike whatsoever.

Small niggles, design foibles, the odd quirk – well, they're all part and parcel about what old bikes are, surely? And yet here I honestly can't find a single thing to gripe about. From an ergonomic perspective the GPz750 fitted like a glove. Everything felt totally intuitive which, from my experience, is an extremely rare occurrence and something worthy of note.

Of course, you could possibly interpret all that as being Honda-sanitised or urbane, but not a bit of it. Other than a very slight fluffiness just after you pull away – which Ian is going to investigate – the fuelling is creamy-smooth and does everything you could possibly ask of it. The power delivery is linear, predictable and directly proportional to the throttle settings with no delay, surging or hesitancy. Some might say that all well-sorted bikes are like that and I would tend to agree.

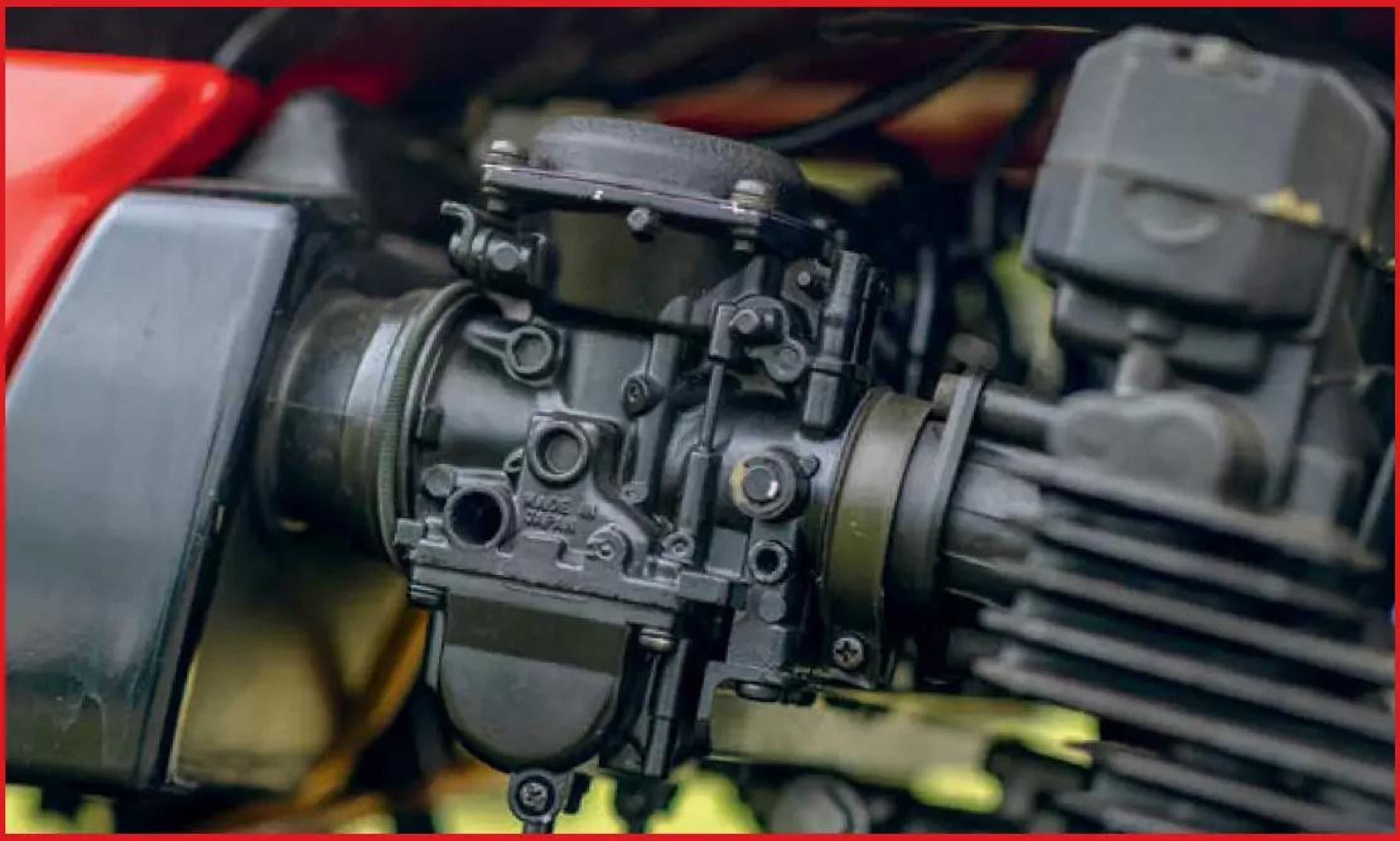
Well, until this ride at least, but the GPz just somehow impresses me disproportionately, and even now I can't quite put my finger on how or why. Well-mannered and predictable are excellent attributes and also perfect descriptions of the bike… until you get past 6000 revs! At this point the motor has come on cam and veritably hurtles towards the horizon in a manner that was previously not even hinted at. And yet this particular DOHC 750 four still does it with style

**ABOVE:** Many a teenage dream in the early 1980s came in 'Firecracker Red'!

**BELOW LEFT:** The only move away from original are the initials of the original owner, who was much-loved.

Forks seem spindly at first. Brakes do the job well enough.

Yes, it's as if they've listened to 'Paint it Black' by The Rolling Stones...


...absolutely everything is black! Engine paint can fall off over time.

## SPECIFICATION

### Kawasaki GPz750

**ENGINE**
738cc air-cooled, DOHC, four-stroke, in-line four

**BORE AND STROKE**
66.0mm x 54.0mm

**CLAIMED HORSEPOWER**
78bhp @ 9500rpm

**MAXIMUM TORQUE**
43.3lb-ft @ 7000rpm

**TRANSMISSION TYPE**
5 speed

**COMPRESSION RATIO**
9.5:1

**CARBURATION**
4 x 36mm Mikuni BS

**TYRES**
100/90 – 19 (F) 120/19 -18 (R)

**FUEL CAPACITY**
4.7 gallons (21.4 litres)

**BRAKES**
2 x 260mm disc (F)
1 x260mm disc (R)

**WET WEIGHT**
217kg (478lb)

Not the biggest, big four, but not really a middleweight either.

Kawasaki
GPz

**ABOVE:** Black chrome pipes bark Kawasaki in more ways than one!

and aplomb, retaining all of the aforementioned poise and sophistication – just at a significantly enhanced velocity.

Possibly some might wish said progress mimicked that of the hairy, lairy, triples that had preceded this machine but no, not exactly. That essential Kawasaki 'let the good times roll' joie de vivre is still there but in a subtly revised and updated format refined to fit the early 1980s.

This is very much in keeping with the company's rebranding policy of the period where they were looking to lose just a little of the bad-boy image and subtly move on to shock and awe. According to the press releases of the day, the GPz750's cylinder heads had been ported and I can believe that, given how well the bike acquits itself. Kawasaki were pretty sure they had a significant hit on their hands stateside as well; they even ran a GPz750, bog stock only, race series to prove to the bike-buying public just how good their product was.

Handling-wise, the bike impresses and shows just how far Kawasaki had come in a relatively short time – no more hinge in the middle or triple-with-a-ripple shenanigans thankfully – just decent, predictable handling. And for an inline, UJM, three-quarter litre four of the period, the GPz750 handles significantly better than you might expect.

My personal benchmark for the period is the bevel-drive Ducati V-twins and although nowhere near that level, the sports four UJM here is impressive and very possibly better than some of its contemporaries. Likewise, the brakes aren't in the same league as Brembo but they're substantially better than what had gone before. Given that the following versions of the model would sport the much-vaunted Uni-Trak rear-end, the OEM red sprung KYB shocks here give a good account of themselves. Oh, and if you were thinking that bikini fairing was purely for styling, you'd be wrong. It does a surprisingly good job of deflecting the air over the rider and without any undue noise either.

To date I've ridden numerous 750/900 fours of the 70s and early 80s, including one of Gallarate's magnificent offerings, and they've impressed to varying degrees. The MV Agusta was, is, and will forever, remain out of reach sadly, and I've yet to sample Yamaha's XJ750.

Therefore, based on the experiences of this road test, availability and financial restrictions, I'd say I'd happily home a Kawasaki GPz750 as my preferred option from the capacity grouping of the period. A twin shock version like this might set you back £3000-£4000 but the later Uni-Trak versions go for silly money at around £2000-£3000. Extremely good value for the outlay, a proven power unit with decent spares sources and an outstanding reputation. Seriously, what's not to like? *cmm*

## The owner's tale – Ian Bird

**The story behind my acquisition of this bike is a sad one. A friend bought this bike new in 1982 and used it sparingly until it was parked up in 2001 with only 4052 miles on the clock.**

**He had other bikes and this one was not ridden again. Unfortunately, he became ill and was unable to ride anymore. In 2022 his wife asked if I could give some idea of values for the sale of the bikes. I did some research on them, with this one being difficult to value due to the scarcity of information. I had only seen photos of the bikes, but when I saw this one in the flesh I made an offer £1000 over my initial valuation as I really did like the GPz750R1, and the chance to buy an absolutely original one in such immaculate condition may never have come along again. The offer was accepted as they were happy for the bike to go to a good home.**

**After standing for 21 years with fuel in the tank and carbs, the bike took some recommissioning, with the tank going to Steve Cooper for a clean-out, and the carbs having to come off and be cleaned four times before the bike would run anywhere near properly; even so, it is still a little woolly low down in the rev range but hopefully will improve with use. For safety's sake the original tyres were changed, the brake calipers overhauled and the brake lines changed. A new battery was purchased, and that was it for changes. The bike was so original it pained me to change things, but it was bought to be used and enjoyed, not kept as a museum piece.**

**Sadly, my friend passed away at the beginning of 2024.**

**The lettering on the side-panels is his initials, and this was the only bike of his to have that done – they will stay as a tribute to him, and despite my aversion to cleaning bikes unnecessarily, I feel a responsibility to keep this one as immaculate as he had done.**

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# THE GYPSY DANCER

Ted Aves of the International Laverda Owners Club relates the inception of the Laverda Jota after interviewing Richard and Roger Slater for the ILOC 50th Anniversary Book.

WORDS: **TED AVES** PICS: **MORTONS ARCHIVE, BRIDGESTONE, ILOC**

**Automotive history is filled with evocative model names which become so legendary that they transcend the original manufacturers' name.**

Think E-Type, GT40, Mustang. The motorcycle world has as many familiar evocative names which stir the soul and quicken the pulse: Black Shadow, Z1, Bonneville and Commando amongst many. Another such name that has almost mystical status is 'Jota'. But, if we can be frank, just what the hell is a Jota?

We suppose this is time to find out, as this year marks the 50th anniversary of the inception of the legendary superbike from Laverda, with the very first machine appearing on these shores in December 1975.

Let's start with Richard and Roger Slater. In fact, it's the only place to start. The Slater Brothers were the Laverda importers who came up with the idea after the triple's impressive debut in production racing.

From the very beginning of Laverda, the factory's success was founded on competition results. The early Laverda machines were 75cc, and later, 100cc four-stroke singles. These machines' reputation for performance and reliability during the 1950s was cemented with victories in the red-hot heat of endurance races like the Moto Giro d'Italia and Milano-Taranto.

The commitment to racing continued in the late 1960s with the launch of the 650 four-stroke

BRIDGESTONE
LAVERDA

56
LAVERDA
SHOEI
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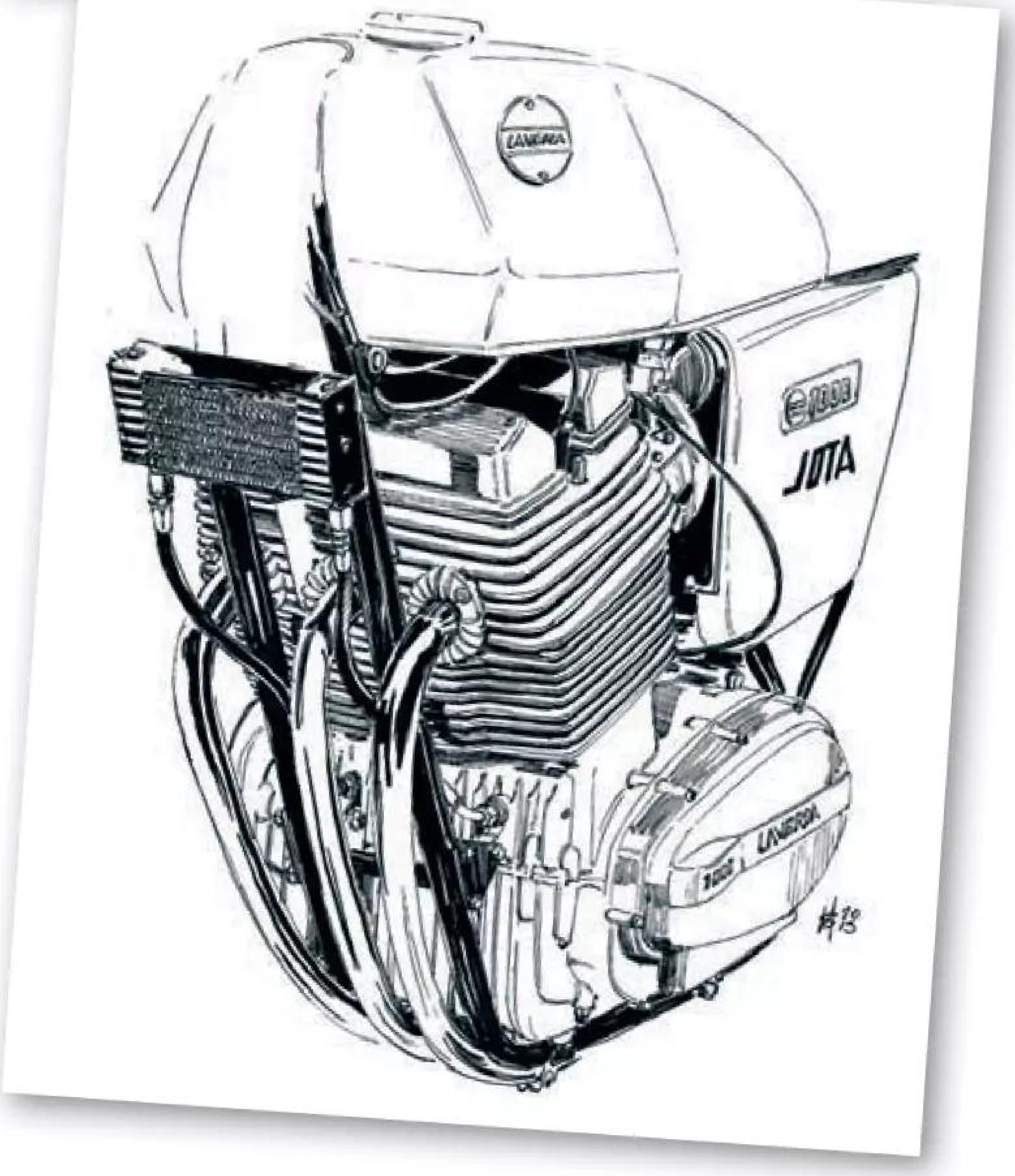
FORMULA 500

The brothers Slater!



A beautiful line drawing of the Jota's power unit. It's art, that is!

twin, which quickly evolved into the 750 SOHC twin. The 750 in its various guises became a big seller in Europe in the early 1970s, once again validated by success in endurance racing.

The ultimate racing twin, the 750SFC, is still a much sought-after machine by enthusiasts and collectors. It is also responsible for the Laverda association with the colour orange; all SFCs were supplied in orange, originally chosen to help distinguish them during endurance races and their success confirmed the marque's association with the colour.

With production of the 750 twin barely underway, in 1969 Massimo Laverda announced that Laverda would be developing a 1000cc triple to equal or even beat the groundbreaking Honda 750 that had been launched that year. The first 1000cc triple prototype did indeed utilise the 650 twin as the basis for the triple. Crank throw on these early engines was 120 degrees, but by 1970 this design feature had been altered to the outer cylinders configured at 180 degrees to the centre cylinder. Ironically, this choice was made due to the vibration of the 120-degree triple causing problems like cracking frames, but it did end up

Cool cockpit.

BRIDGESTONE

A seat for two.

Faired or unfaired? What's your preference?

Brembo's best...

producing the individual character and sound that helped to make the first series of triples so iconic.

One person to see the early prototype triple was a man called Roger Slater. He had built up a business working with Velocettes and Vincents, regularly getting parts made in Italy. During our interview for the Anniversary Book, Roger took up the story.

"I had a fellow and he was an Italian; he was a representative for any manufacturer in northern Italy, so if you wanted pistons, a gear, or indeed anything, he used to take the part (or a drawing of it) down to Italy and find a suitable supplier. He'd have one or two made, bring them back, see if they worked and then go back down and order a batch. It was a system that was developing nicely.

"We were getting more and more parts made for the Vincents – gears, the idler wheel in steel, pistons, valves; all sorts made in Italy at super prices. We did very well with them. That developed so well that it got to the point that we really wanted to build a Vincent engine. I said to this fellow: 'Where can we get a Vincent engine made?' He said: 'I know just the place; it's out towards Venice, a little place called Breganze...'

"I duly got a Vincent engine, chucked it in the back of a Citroen Safari and went down to Breganze to meet Massimo Laverda. After all the pleasantries, I showed him the engine, told him what I wanted to do, and he said: 'Well, leave it with me and come back in a month.' So I left the motor with him and came back home, but when I went back down again he said: 'I want to show you something.'

"He took me round the back to a test house and showed me the early triple prototype which never went into production; the one with the single-cam and the belt drive on the outside. He said: 'Forget about the Vincent, you've got to move to a modern motor. How about this? You should import these!' It started from there."

Slater Brothers started importing limited numbers of 750 twins (originally in kit form) but eventually the triple became a reality. The first production triples rolled off the line in 1972, but serious production started in February 1973. Laverda was still a small company in comparison to the Japanese giants, so production of the triple was limited, with most countries receiving imports in single figures.

Roger continues: "We got the feeling it would make a good bike for production racing, but we would need to develop it. We had a Heenan and Froude dyno up at our Collington workshop and we used to hook it up to that. We'd take the back wheel out and then a big, long (unprotected) chain went round the final drive and this thing would be screaming away – the entire village could hear it. We developed it and developed it.

"The first thing we found was that the triple's exhaust pipe collector under the engine didn't have enough diameter. When we looked at that, we thought it was ridiculous; there were three pipes coming into one and that one is the same diameter as the three. Naturally, we're watching this thing and it was purple and red and obviously causing a problem. I had the bright idea that the collector box had got to be a lot bigger, so we

Is there a better-looking classic?

just got some bigger tube, put it on and immediately we got a big horsepower increase. Now the centre-stand didn't work though, so we flattened it, put it back on and it still worked! Then, of course ,with that sorted, we got to work on the silencer.

"We kept on messing with it and altering it; you'd just tack modifications into position then run it on the brake and repeat the process: remove it, alter it, tack it on, run it again. People say the Jota exhaust is just straight through but it's more complicated than that. At one stage we found that an exit twice as big made no difference at all except it was twice as loud. It was an awful, horrible noise with no increase in power whatsoever. Down we went in size again, then down again a bit smaller until the power dropped off. Not only that, we discovered that the positioning and length of the outlet pipe was critical as well, complicating it further. We messed and messed and messed but unfortunately there are now no documents to show what the optimum components were. How we didn't get a patent on what became the Jota exhaust I don't know!"

With this tuned exhaust and carburation adjusted to suit, Slater Brothers offered the 3CE for sale in 1975. True to their word, they were also taking the 3CE racing, piloted by a certain man called Peter 'PK' Davies. They saw that, as with the Laverda factory, racing success directly led to showroom success. And, of course, the Laverda triple was getting a reputation as one of the fastest production bikes on the road.

Roger Slater wasn't resting on his laurels though, and was already thinking about an even more special bike for 1976. He'd already thought of a

x1000 rpm
km/h
OFF
IGNITION

**ABOVE:** Cool clocks leave you in no doubt what you are riding.

Marvellous motor!

Gorgeous from all angles.

name for it: "Our father was keen on music so I had learnt to play the piano at boarding school. I'd got three musical dictionaries and was reading through one of them and I came to the word Jota. It said: 'An ancient gypsy dance, danced in triple time.' I reread that and thought, 'My God.' Purely by chance – I'm reading this thing in bed!

"We had developed the 3C into the 3CE but now we'd got to have a different bike. A proper bike: I was going to call it the Jota. I contacted the factory to discuss this new bike and I went down to Breganze where we had a major meeting in their big boardroom around an impressively long table. They were all there - Massimo Laverda, Luciano Zen, Hans Blomquist and even the parts man Giorgio. They were all wondering what this was all about.

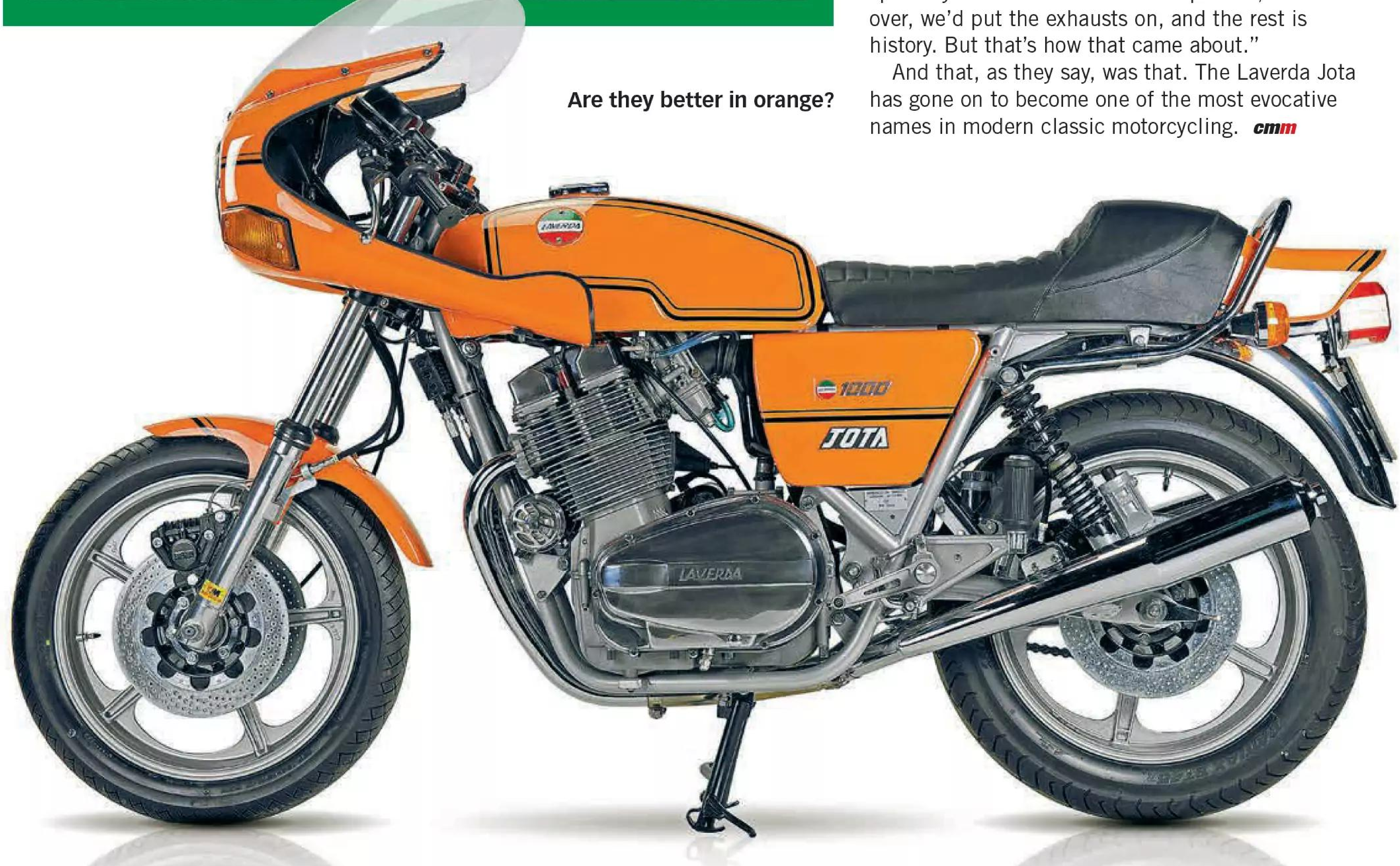
"I said the first thing we'd got to do was put the price up. That went down like a lead balloon. Secondly, we'd got to put our own silencers on it that we'd developed. Thirdly, we'd got to have the 4C race-cam in it and high compression pistons as well. They listened to all this in a somewhat bewildered state, but we eventually got it all thrashed out: They were going to specially assemble them without exhausts but built with the racing components.

"'Now we've got to give this thing a name,' I said. 'It's going to be a special bike; it's got to be named properly. Not 3C or with numbers, you've got to give it a name.' 'Oh, what do you suggest?' they asked. I proudly replied: JOTA! Massimo asked: 'What the hell is a Jota?' So I told him. There was a big roar of laughter around the table; they thought that was absolutely tremendous.

"As soon as I told them what it meant, they knew exactly what it was all about and were absolutely delighted. So, yes, they'd assemble them all specially with 4C cams and 10:1 pistons, send them over, we'd put the exhausts on, and the rest is history. But that's how that came about."

And that, as they say, was that. The Laverda Jota has gone on to become one of the most evocative names in modern classic motorcycling. *cmm*

Are they better in orange?



# BEAR NECESSITIES

It's cheap, it's simple and it's the sort of bike Bertie Simmonds really doesn't like. So why is he smiling so much then?

WORDS: **BERTIE SIMMONDS** PICS: **GARY CHAPMAN**

**It's raining, not pouring, but this old man isn't snoring, he's smiling. And it's a very wide smile indeed.**

It's fair to say that I'm shocked to be writing this and yet I'm wistfully smiling at the recall of my half-a-day's somewhat damp ride on the Royal Enfield Bear 650. It really has left that much of an impression on me. It even says so in my notes: writ large is: 'THIS BIKE MADE ME SMILE!'

And it shouldn't. This is, after all, the sort of bike I'm not really into. Why? I'm a child of the 1970s and the whole Brit bike thing had passed me by because by the time I was an impressionable youngster my father figures (uncles) had already moved on to Japanese bikes. It's why I'm here. It's why original BSAs, Triumphs and Royal Enfields don't have any historical traction with me, although later 1990s-on Trumpets do.

Also, I'm a big fella and I need a lot of ponies to get me off the line (stunt rider Alex Strange pictured) so a 650cc parallel twin pushing out ➲

just 47 weedy donks isn't going to cut the mustard, is it? And I don't really do the 'scrambler'-type thing as I find them a wee bit pretentious.

And yet here I am, in the drizzling rain, smiling my widest smile and revelling in what the Bear offers: simple, no frills, two-wheeled fun. But first, the elephant in the room: the colour scheme. No, this one isn't for me and the daft number board seems a bit ostentatious doesn't it? But then, after some digging in the Royal Enfield press bumpf, I found out that the name of the bike itself is from some Californian desert race called 'The Big Bear Run' won by 'Fast' Eddie Mulder in 1960, riding – you guessed it – a 500cc Royal Enfield Fury. So, let's allow it the number board (yes, apparently 249 was Eddie's number in the race) but get the bike in a different colour – even if these colours ape the Fury that he took that 1960 win on…

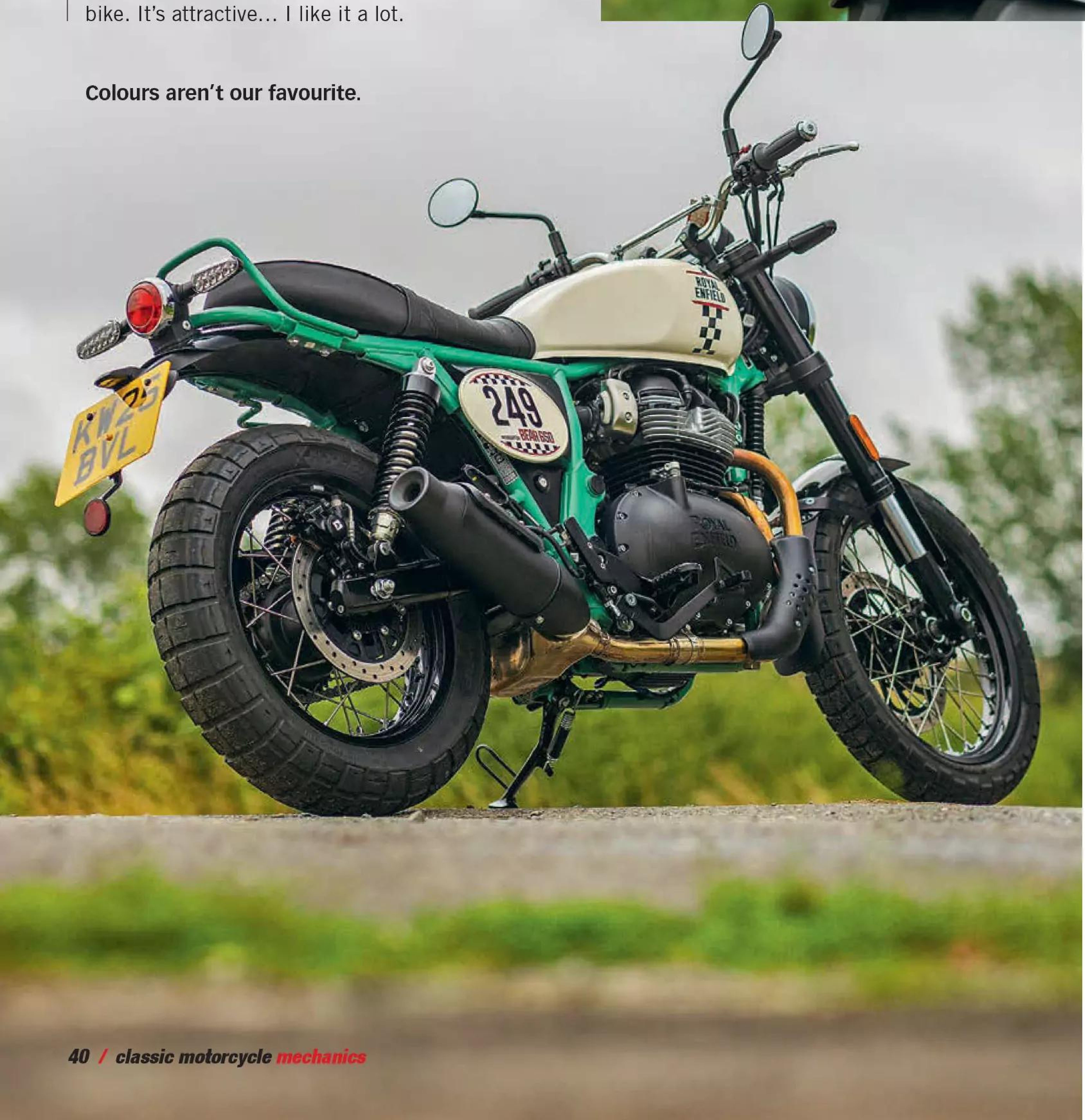
Colours aside, the pre-ride walk-around tells me that this is indeed a 'scrambler'-type bike, a popular 'retro' style of machine that we've seen before from a number of manufacturers. The tyres are chunky so that gives it away; the front is a 19-incher and the rear a 17, a change from the Interceptor/Conti-GT's 18-inchers, which is the basis of this machine. The exhaust end-can isn't quite a hi-rise offering like that seen on some 'scramblers' but it will do. Meanwhile, the long, straight seat, handlebar reinforcing strut and rugged-looking foot-pegs all suit the style of the bike. It's attractive… I like it a lot.

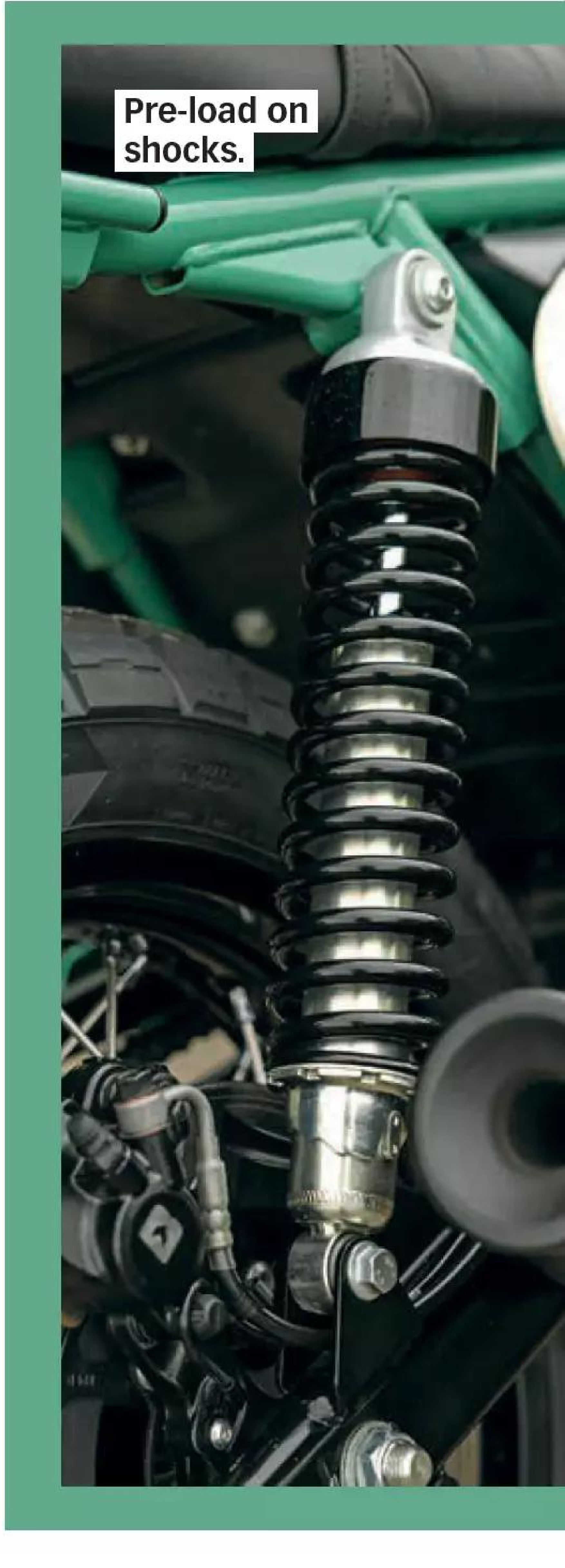
Comfy seat…

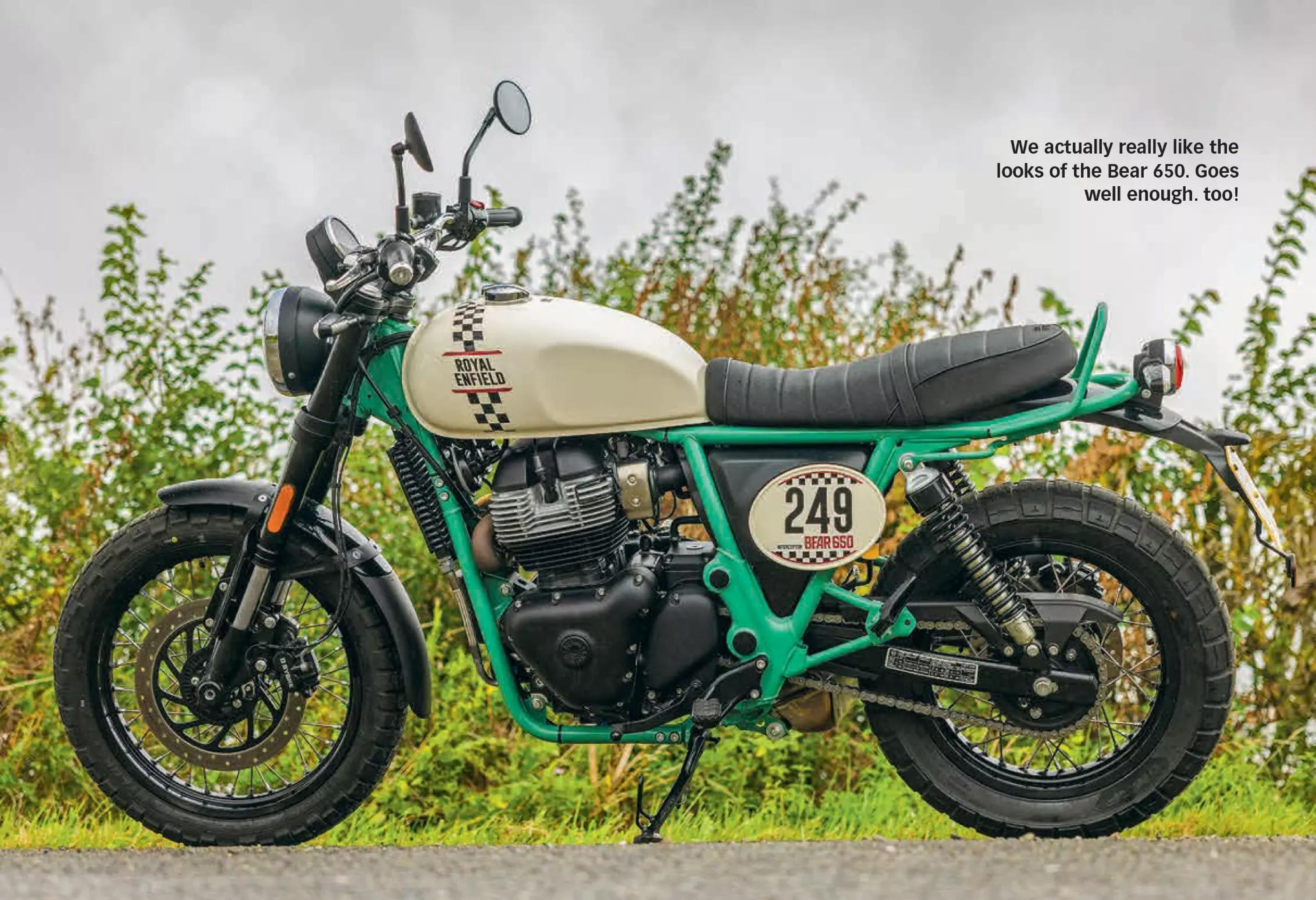
…clear clocks.

Modern LED lights.

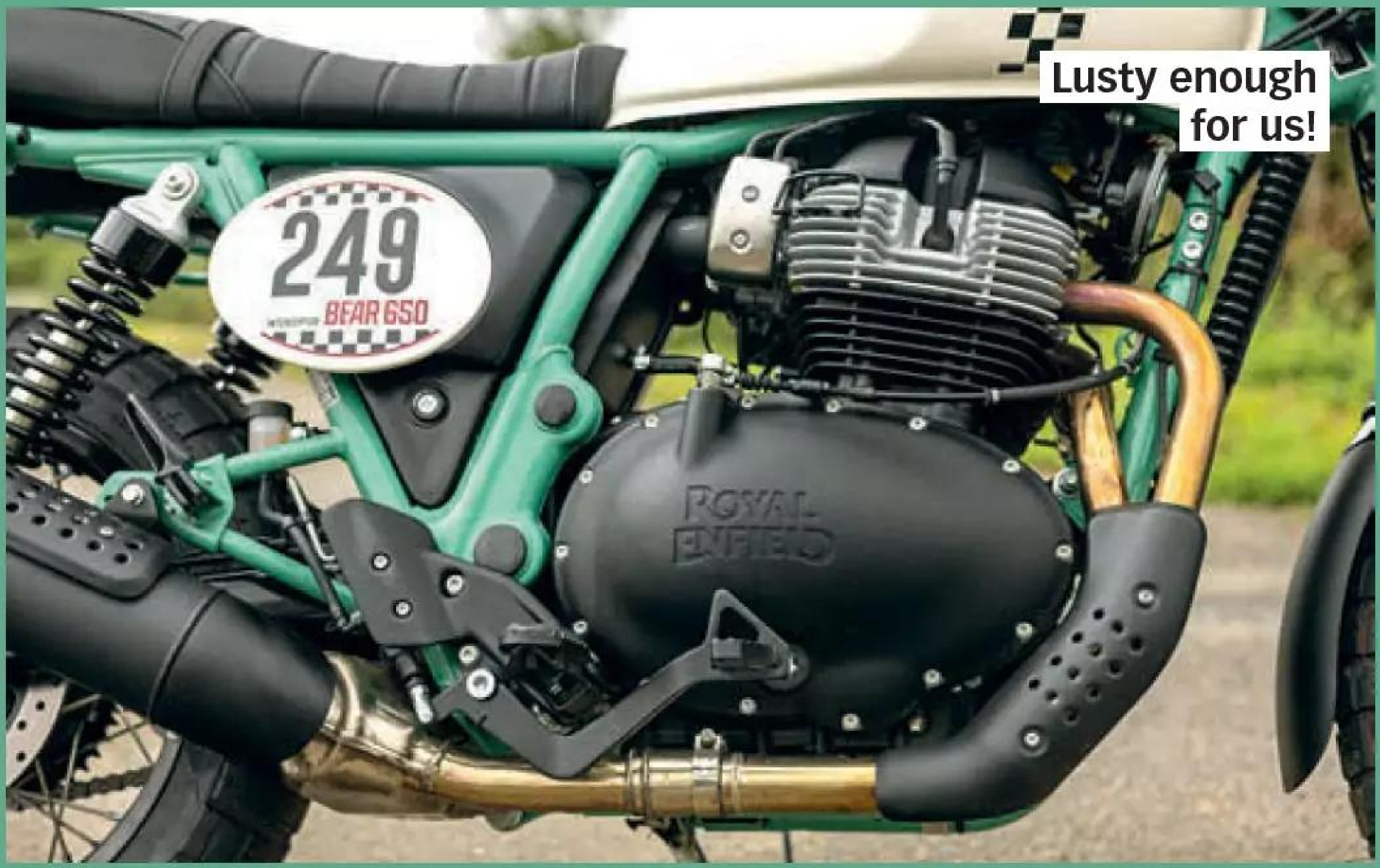
**Colours aren't our favourite.**




Pre-load on shocks.



**We actually really like the looks of the Bear 650. Goes well enough. too!**



**Lusty enough for us!**

**Subtle oil-cooler.**

**ByBre part of Brembo.**

Chucking a leg over the Bear and it feels good. Spotting the word 'SHOWA' atop the forks is reassuring, even if 'ByBre' on the brake caliper and 'MRF' on the tyres may not, but the proof of the pudding and all that, more of which later.

The clocks and controls are rather funky and a pleasant mix of old and new looking. The red starter/run button is old-school (if a bit plasticky) but a quick stab gets that parallel twin rumbling. The clocks (well, clock) I love. It's a clear TFT dash nabbed from one of RE's other models apparently. But it's crisp and clear, giving you a wide array of information from rpm, speed, fuel level, engine management info, ABS, if your side-stand is down, miles, etc. It's all here. And should you be so inclined, you can hook up the dash's 'Tripper' technology to connect to your smartphone/Google Maps to use the display as a sat-nav system. Nice.

But we're not here for such advanced tech – I want to be won over by belt and braces basic biking today. In goes the light cable clutch, a few revs, clunk into gear and pull away. Oooh… first smile of the day comes from the 648cc parallel twin motor: unassuming and unthreatening may not excitement make (or so you'd think), but when you get that 270-degree crank spinning and you're making some noise, it's really fun. Who cares if it's only giving you 47bhp at just over 7000 revs? You (well, I) just seem to be really enjoying it. You really want to be knocking between 4-7000rpm and use the six speeds to dance between those numbers. It's never going to scare you silly…

Now, I haven't ridden an Interceptor for quite a while, but apparently there is a difference between these engines. The Bear 650 has a different ➲

249 was Eddie's number.

Other colours better!

Great for a B-road potter!

two-into-one exhaust system for more noise (which is nice) and apparently it gives a bit more peak torque (about 42lb-ft) at around 5000rpm, even if the max power is the same between the Bear and the other 650 parallel twin platforms. It's enough…

Handling is where I'm even more impressed. My jaunt on the Bear was on slippery, rural roads and a bit on a dual carriageway. The suspension front and rear were nicely firm for me. Clearly this bike is going to have more ground clearance than the likes of the Interceptor and the Showa 43mm inverted forks have more travel, too. Apparently, the rear shocks are also Showa and offer only pre-load adjustment, while the forks are, unfortunately, not adjustable, but seemed fine for me. And while on those dull, straight pieces of Tarmac I was able to stick with all but the fastest traffic, and the gearing made the Bear punchy enough for overtakes.

I was actually quite surprised at how pleasingly firm the ride was – even when I grabbed that front anchor (bigger disc than the older bikes) there wasn't a great deal of dive and retardation was swift and predictable, so thank you ByBre (apparently, part of the Brembo concern). It's also worth noting that while I hadn't a clue where the tyres were made (India, apparently), and hadn't heard of the brand before, they did their job in the conditions well enough. I'm sure some owners may get sniffy and change them for something else, but I thought they did an admirable job.

Comfort is good on the Bear. It's a different feel to the roadster-based Enfields so the seat is at 830mm and that felt pretty comfy for me, and while I wasn't in the saddle for prolonged periods of time, the hour or so at a time was perfectly comfy, thank you very much. Fuel economy? Not a clue – the tank takes just under 14 litres and this ain't no tourer anyways.

But it is a looker. The styling is bob-on. Yes, there are modern touches like that dash (rather than old-style dials) and LED lights festoon the front and rear-ends, but then you see the simple lines of that motor, along with the attractive finning, the traditional loop frame and spoked wheels. It just looks really good – especially in the other colours of 'Petrol Green', erm… 'Wild Honey' and 'Golden Shadow'. While these poncey, pretentious colours sound like the things we used to buy in nightclub toilets on a Saturday night (think about it) they are cheaper than the Bear you see in these pictures. Oh, and the mirrors work.

I really want to steer clear of the word 'charm' here, but I can't avoid it. There's an honesty to this bike, a real-world (ahem) 'charm' in how this bike does its job and how it makes you feel doing it. Posting on our CMM Facebook page the day I rode it saying how good I thought it was and how surprised I was showed that I'm not alone in thinking this – so that's reassuring.

The Bear 650 is a bike that wins you over and then it does it all over again when it sinks in how much the bike costs. Or rather how 'not very much' it costs. You can cage a Bear in your garage for around £6749, and even if you poke it with a pointy stick it won't get angry with you. Better still, the cheaper version (by a hundred to a few hundred quid) are the other colour schemes, which I prefer.

Now, while I won't say that this less than 50bhp machine is competing with the likes of the super-sexy retro Kawasaki Z900RS, it costs half the amount of the Kwak, produces half the power, but in no way is it only conjuring up just half the fun. Far from it… And,should you wish, you can spend a few quid on extras such as the comfort seat, headlight guard, radiator guard, soft luggage and wind deflector. Me? Well, if they did a louder exhaust, I'd be up for that.

So then, the Royal Enfield Bear 650 sits alongside a number of things I shouldn't really like but actually really, REALLY do like. The best thing of all about the Bear 650 is that it's not a guilty pleasure. You can – and should – just take the bike for what it is and enjoy it. And at this price, you can… **cmm**

## SPECIFICATION

# ROYAL ENFIELD
## BEAR 650

**ENGINE**
Type: 648cc, air-/oil-cooled, eight-valve, SOHC parallel-twin four-stroke

**MAXIMUM POWER**
47bhp @ 7150rpm

**MAXIMUM TORQUE**
41.7b-ft @ 5150rpm

**TRANSMISSION**
6-speed

**FINAL DRIVE**
Chain

**FRAME**
Steel tubular spine/cradle

**SUSPENSION**
Front: 43mm inverted Showa telescopic forks, unadjustable. Rear: Twin rear shocks adjustable for pre-load only

**BRAKES**
Front: Single 320mm disc with twin-piston ByBre caliper. Rear: 270mm disc, single-piston caliper

**TYRES**
Front: 100/90-19
Rear: 140/80-17

**SEAT HEIGHT**
830mm

**WHEELBASE**
1460mm

**WET WEIGHT**
214kg

**FUEL CAPACITY**
13.7 litres

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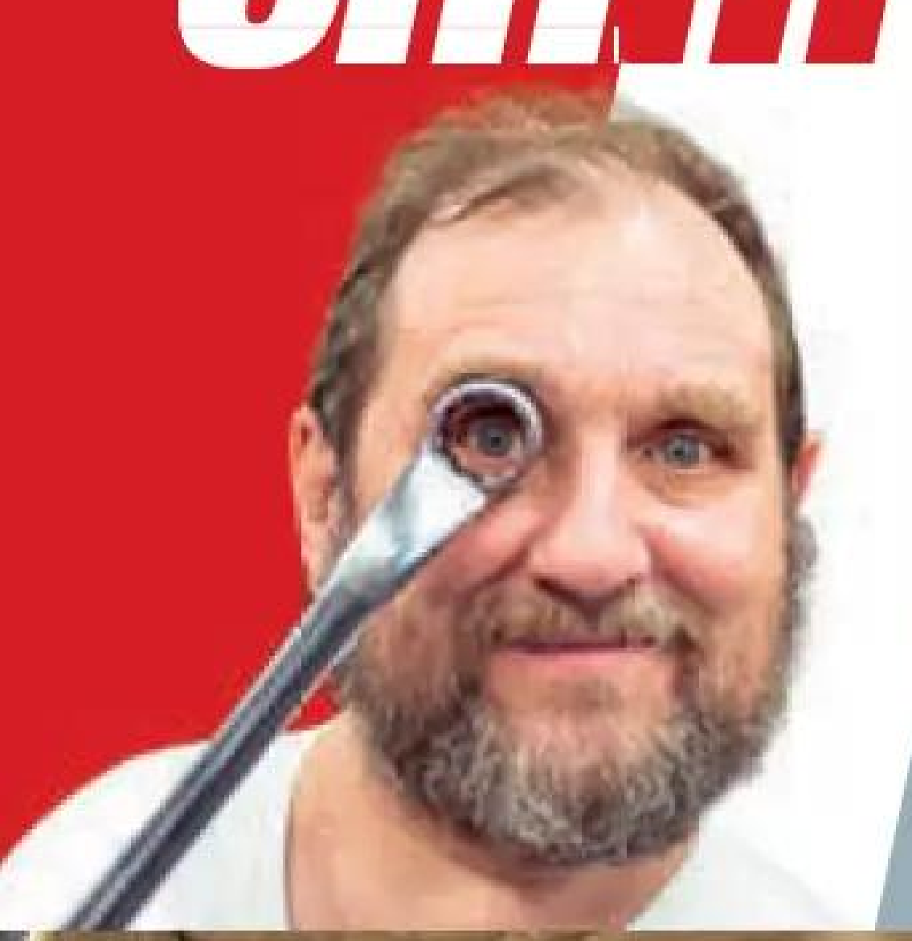
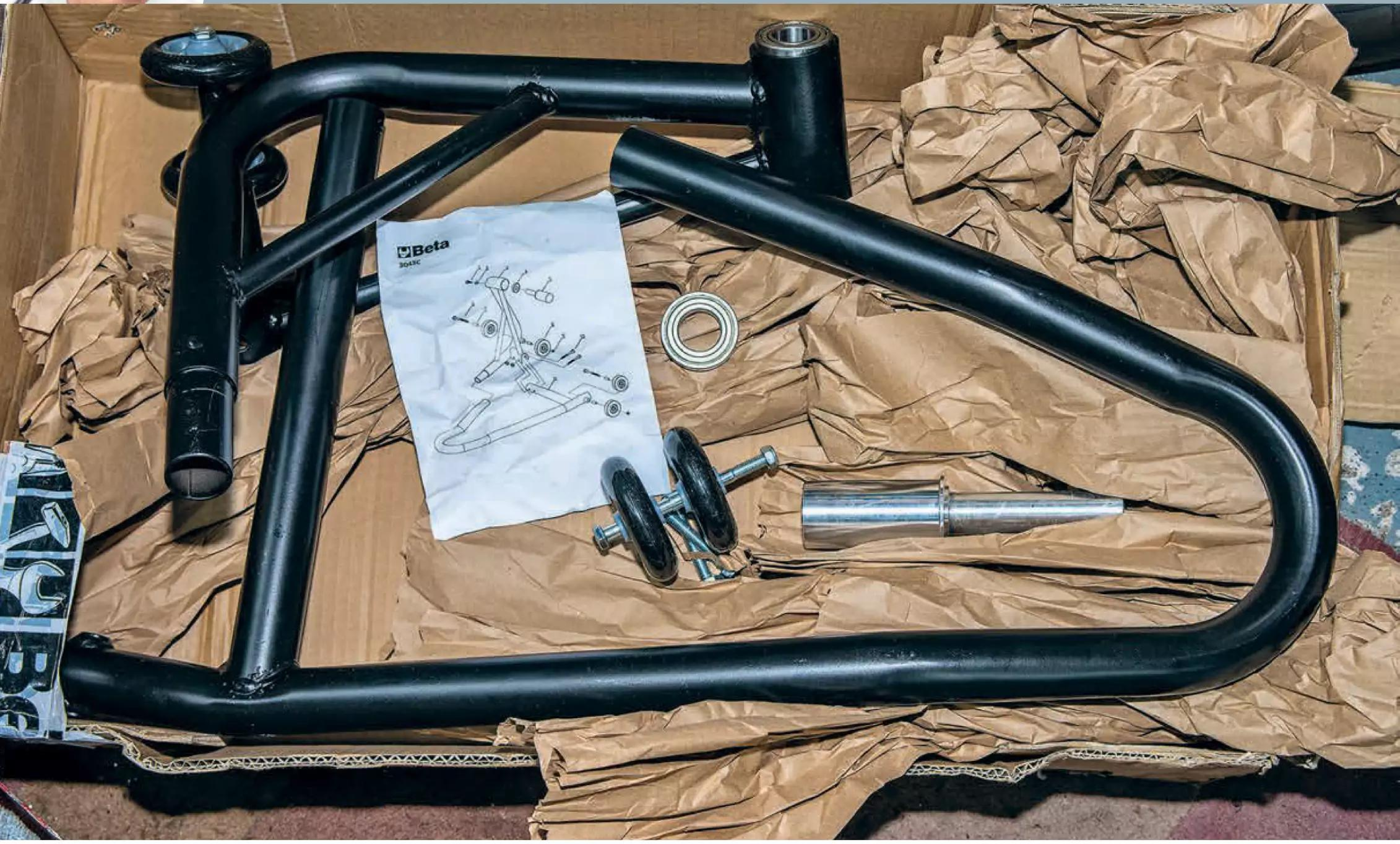
# Tool of the month

with BIKER'S TOOLBOX



**Ralph Ferrand** works with tools all day long – he sells them too at **bikerstoolbox.co.uk** so he knows what works.



# Stand – and deliver!

**Last month I examined the paddock stands on offer from Italian professional tool manufacturer Beta Tools. This month I have another stand from Beta and also a British curve ball: the Abba Superbike Stand.**

Between Beta contacting me and proffering their stands and now, I made an ill-informed decision to buy a 'cheap' bike to do up and turn a coin with (more on that at a later date), a 2001 model Triumph Speed Triple with a single-sided swingarm. The bike came with a DIY paddock stand, but I thought whilst I have a bike here with a single-sided swinger I should try Beta Tools offering for this application.

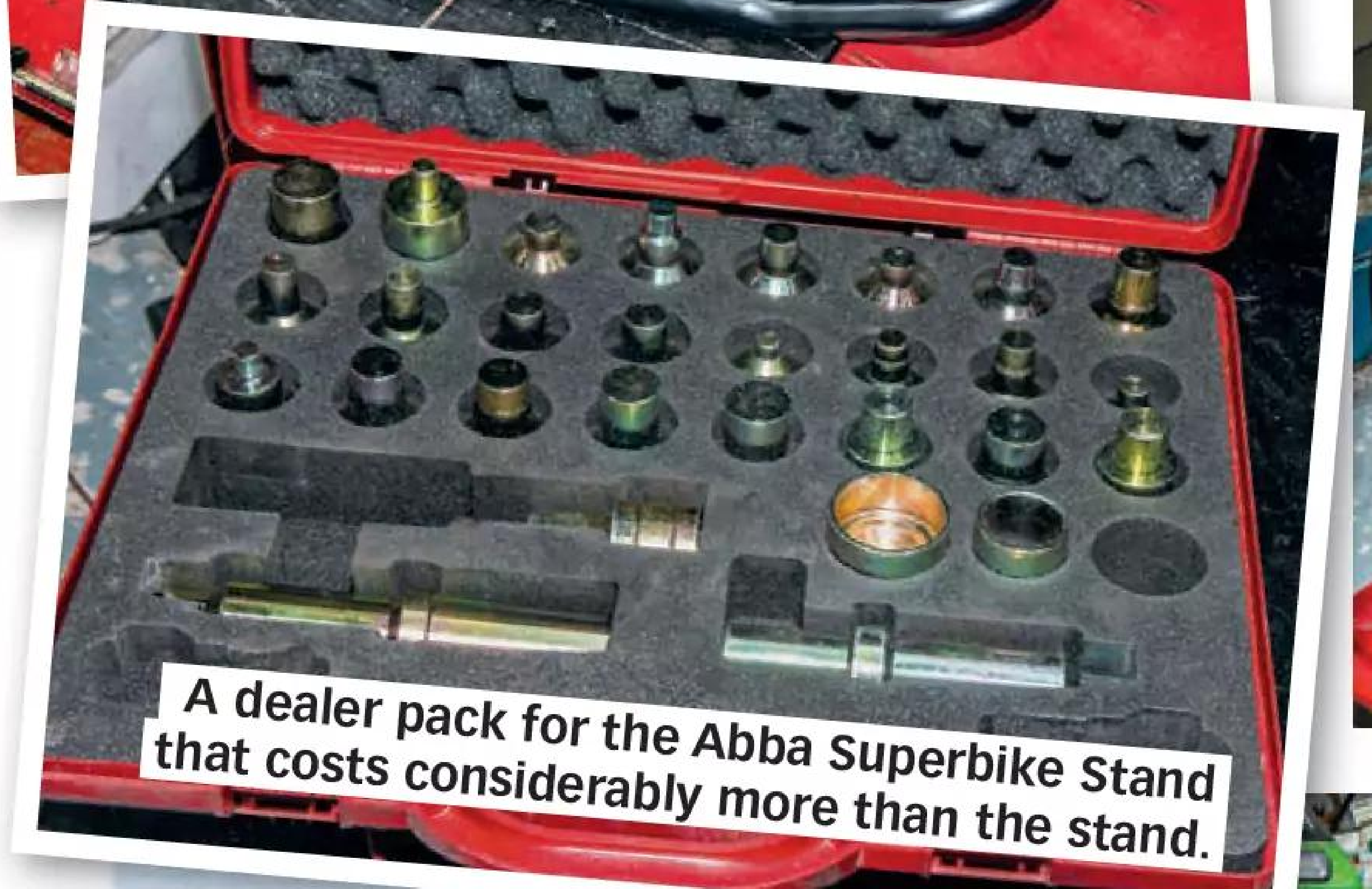
As with all their other stands it came flat-pack. I had to specify what bike it was for so that they could supply me the pin suitable for my bike axle, which came separately, though the stand did have a pin for some unspecified bike in the box. As with the others in their range the instructions were perfunctory in the extreme, but I guess if you intend to work on a motorcycle, you should have enough savvy to be able to work it out. Initially, on assembly, I thought that the pin wasn't a great fit in my spindle, until I realised that my spindle was full of all manner of crap from years of abuse and the reason the cheap stand fitted so easily was because it had a pin that was actually a poor fit!

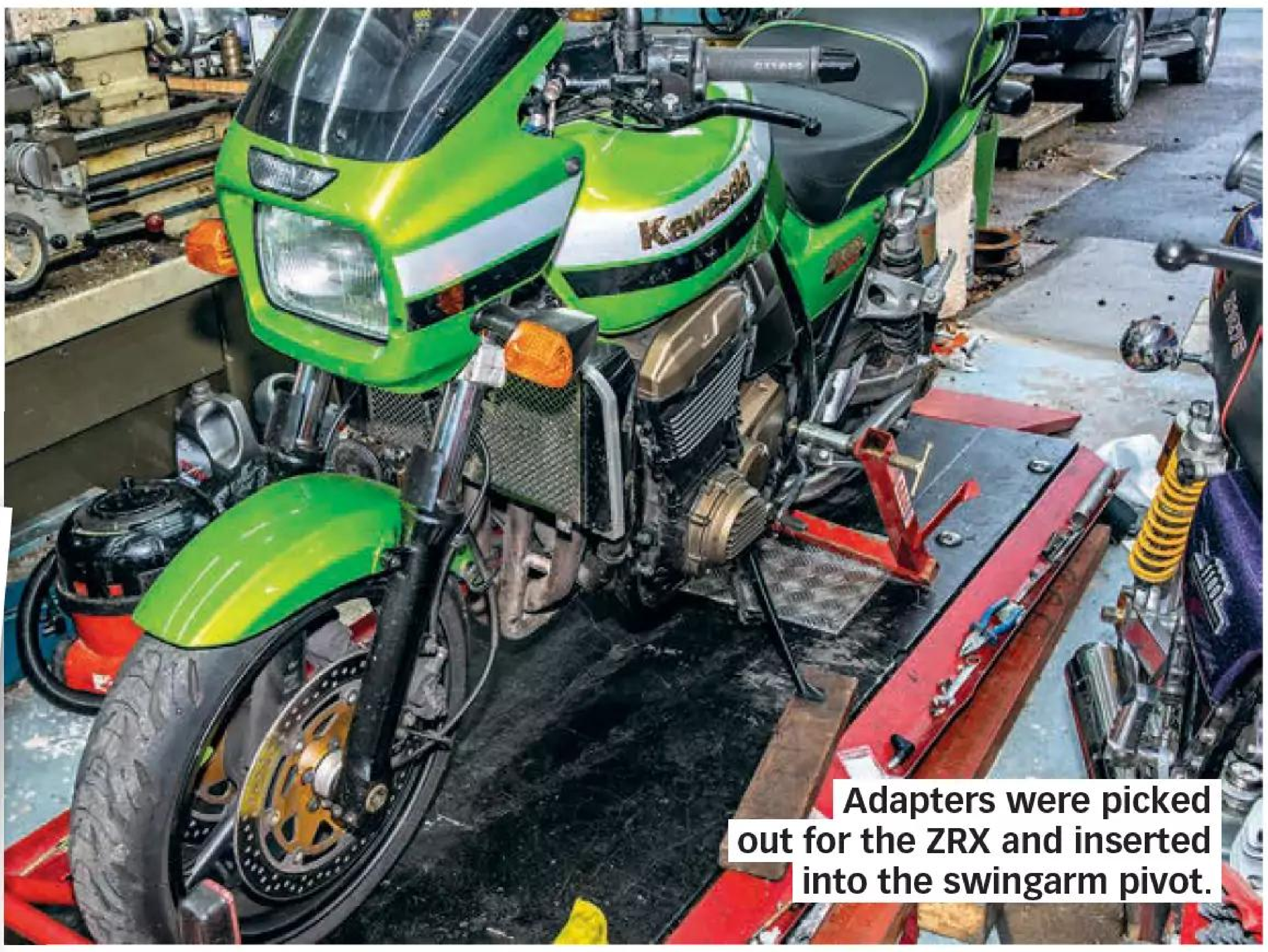
Using a single-sided paddock stand is a piece of cake: pop the bike on the side stand, slide the pin into the rear wheel spindle and as you push down

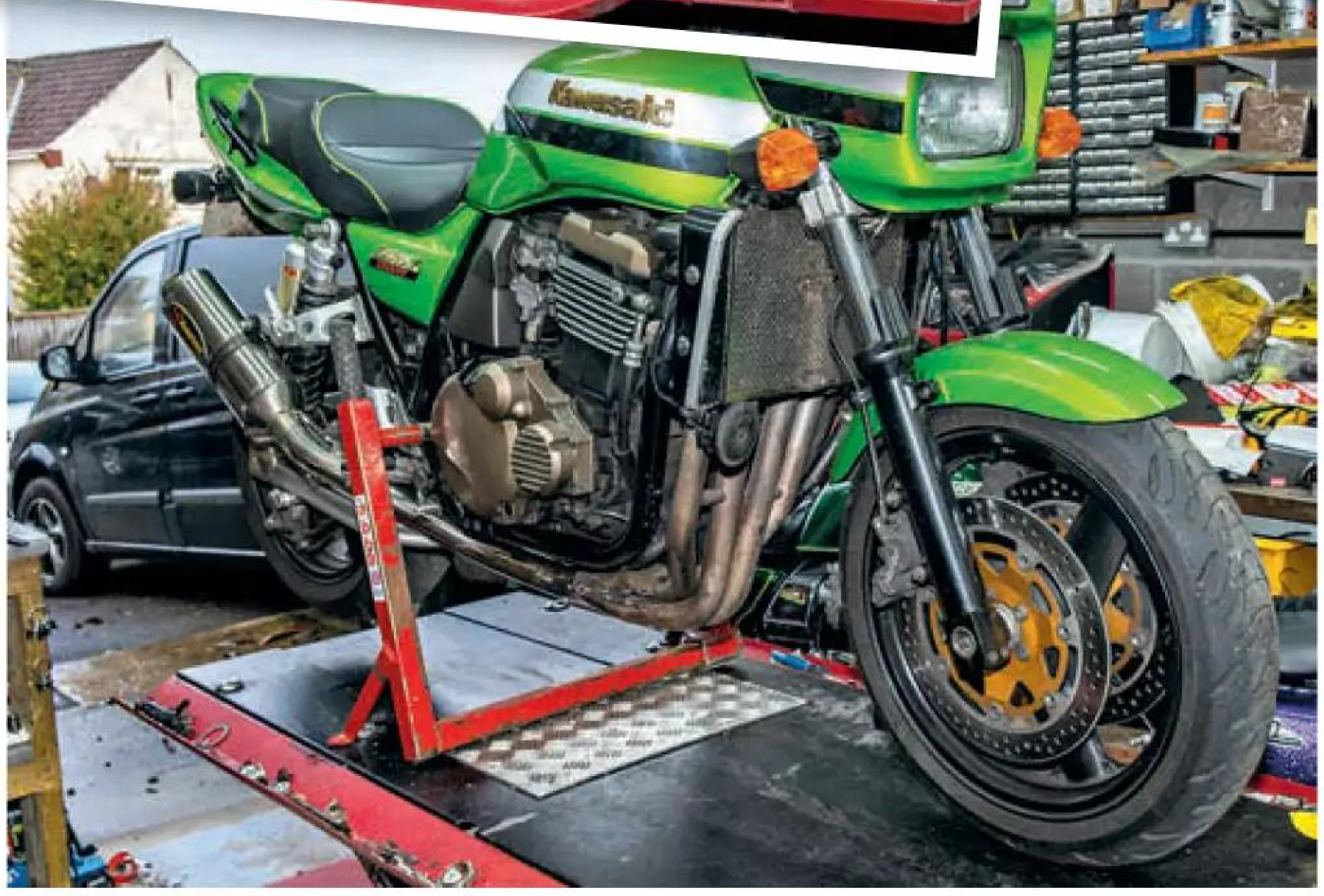
**ABOVE:** The Beta stand comes flat-pack.

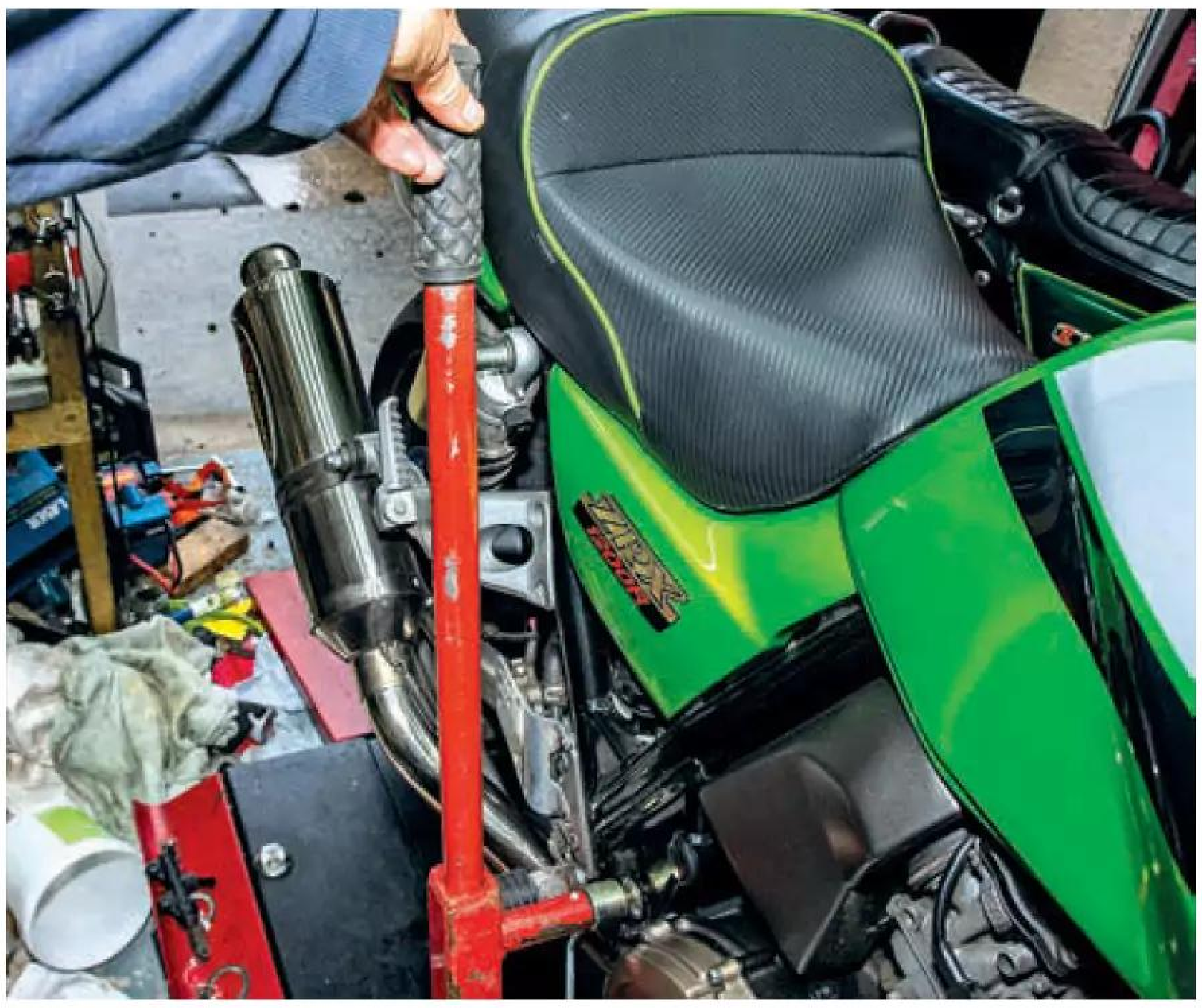
**BELOW LEFT:** Sliding the pin into the rear wheel spindle.

The old Triumph on the Beta Stand – nice and solid!


A dealer pack for the Abba Superbike Stand that costs considerably more than the stand.


Adapters were picked out for the ZRX and inserted into the swingarm pivot.





**ABOVE LEFT:** **Rex safely supported by the Abba Stand on my bike bench.**

**ABOVE RIGHT:** **A lifting handle pulls out of the right-hand side of the stand.**

on the handle, so it brings the bike up to the vertical and eventually lifts the rear wheel off the ground. The Beta Tools stand is far more secure and rigid than the cheaper one the bike came with. I have no idea what either stand costs, but as I mentioned in the previous part, saving money on such a crucial piece of kit is a recipe for disaster. I can say that I can heartily recommend the Beta stand.

I have had an Abba Superbike Stand for well over 20 years. The stand works by lifting the motorcycle by the swingarm spindle using different adapters to fit all the various makes out there. I bought mine together with a professional workshop adapter kit which cost twice as much as the stand. Most folk buy an Abba stand for their own bikes and will buy the specific adapters for their steeds.

You assemble the stand around the bike, inserting the adapters attached to both arms into or around the swingarm spindle and then tension the securing bolt on the left-hand side, assuming you are using it the way round I do (see photos). You can use the stand from either side of the bike, but I have found on a bike bench that lifting from the left-hand side means the bike travels too far forward and the wheel hits the stop or, worse still, goes over the front of the bench. Once secure, the lifting lever is pulled upwards out of the right-hand arm and then the bike is lifted upwards and backwards.

Although it can be used single-handed, I don't like using mine on my tod, particularly as it is usually on the bike bench with other bikes close by. Used on a bike bench with some straps you can strip a bike down to bear frame and swingarm. If used properly they are very stable. Some folks swear by Abba stands: editor Bertie for one, but he admits he's no pro-workshopper! To be honest, I very rarely use mine and know of few who use them regularly in the trade. We all have them, but they can be a bit of a faff to set up and paddock stands are much quicker.

Abba make some very fancy adaptations on the theme including the Sky Lift (again, Bertie has one and loves it) but having two professional bike lift benches it is not something I have considered, but possibly good for a mobile mechanic. *cmm*

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Here are our prizes for YOU in this December issue of CMM...

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# Laverda Jota

1000
JOTA
LAVERDA

PIC: **STUART COLLINS/INTERNATIONAL LAVERDA OWNERS CLUB**

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Started cutting with a hacksaw.

WORDS AND PICS: **RALPH FERRAND**

## Project Kawasaki Z900 Special Part 7

# Foot-loose!

…not fancy-free! Our Ralph is getting on with sorting the homemade foot-rests for his Kawasaki Z900 Special.

**I'm back at the metal bashing bench questioning my sanity, wondering why I couldn't just be happy with some ready-made rear-sets, but I like to make stuff truly original and custom in the real sense of the word.**

In all honesty, from a pose point of view, my efforts are actually wasted because 99 per cent of those looking at the bike only really notice a lot of shiny stuff and the 'in-your-face' candy over metal flake paint. But I'm not building this bike for anyone else, I'm building it for me, and the pride in having a truly unique bike cannot have a price attached.

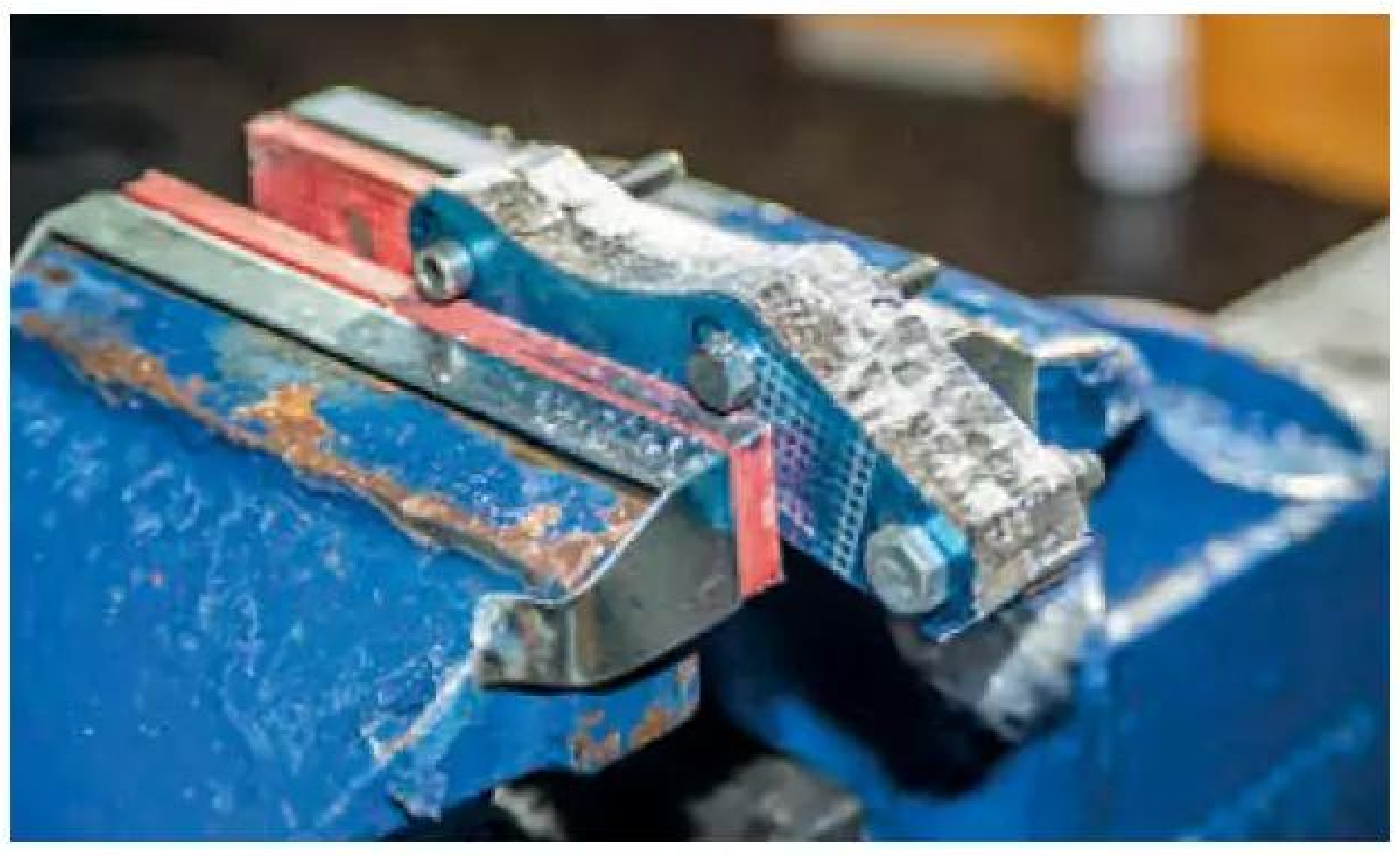
Last time I ended with a card mock-up of the aluminium alloy footrest hanger which I transferred to a piece of aluminium flat bar, using some marking blue, scriber and centre-punch.

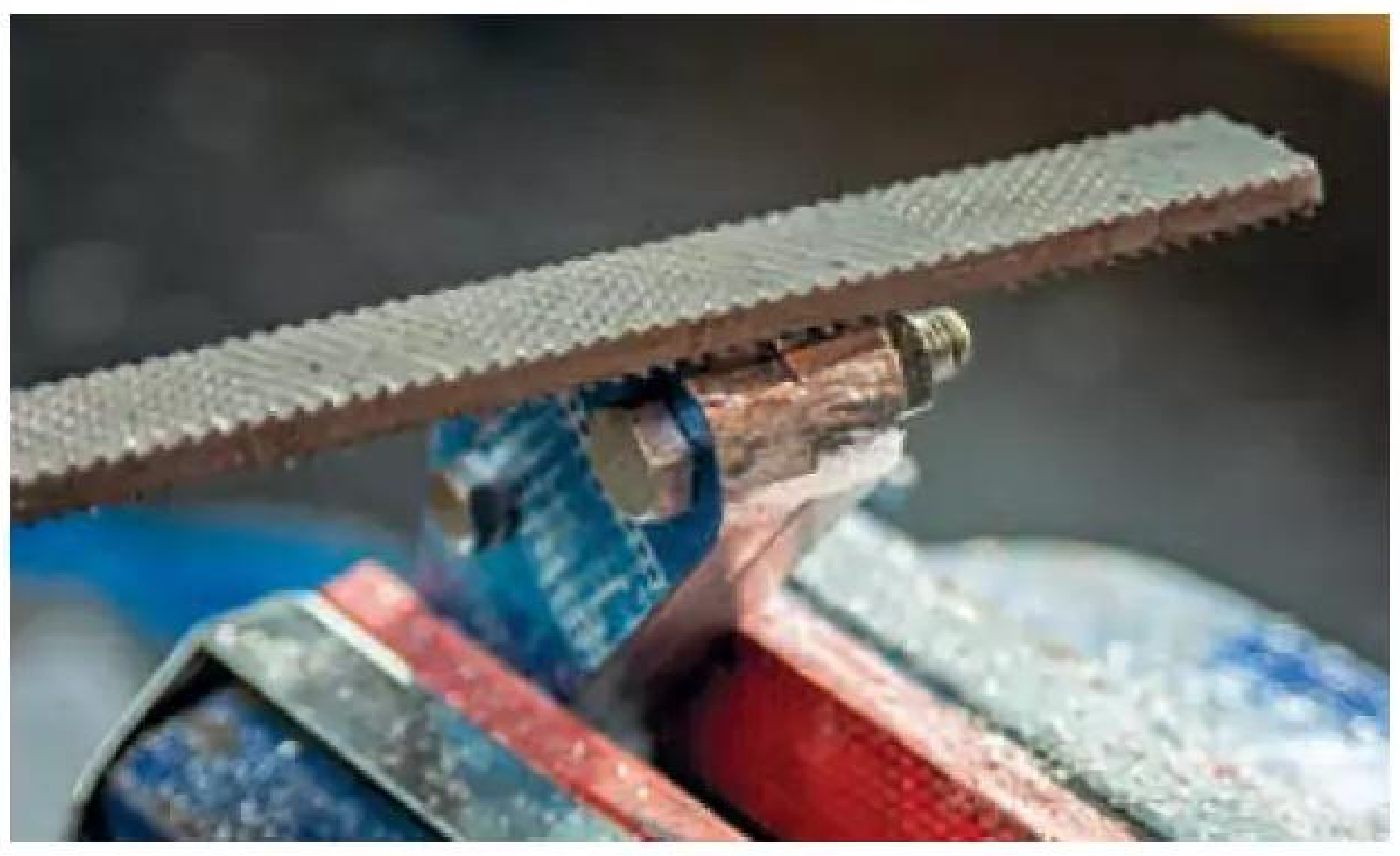
The material was a bit too thick for my much-abused vertical bandsaw, so I kicked off by making the initial straight cuts using a hacksaw with the material clamped in my bench vice. There were a number of curves that did not lend themselves to hacksawing so I dug out the Sealey air-saw I tested for Tool of the Month. This was perfect for cutting out the curves, though I would caution if you're getting one to don some ear defenders, as they're not the quietest tools in the workshop. I do love the scream of air tools – the sound takes me back to the Brabazon hanger in Filton where I did much of my apprenticeship.

I drilled and reamed the holes and used bolts to clamp the two sides together, so that I could shape them, as one, which I did mainly with hand files in a manner somewhat similar to the engine plates I made last time, so little point in revisiting old ground.

The original Zed mounts are fixed with metric fine special studs that screw into

**Air-saw was the easiest way to cut the curves.**


**The two sides were bolted together so that I could shape both sides together.**


**I filed the parts to the final shape.**

The donor bolts with plenty of plain section.

The first cut was made all the way through the fixture.

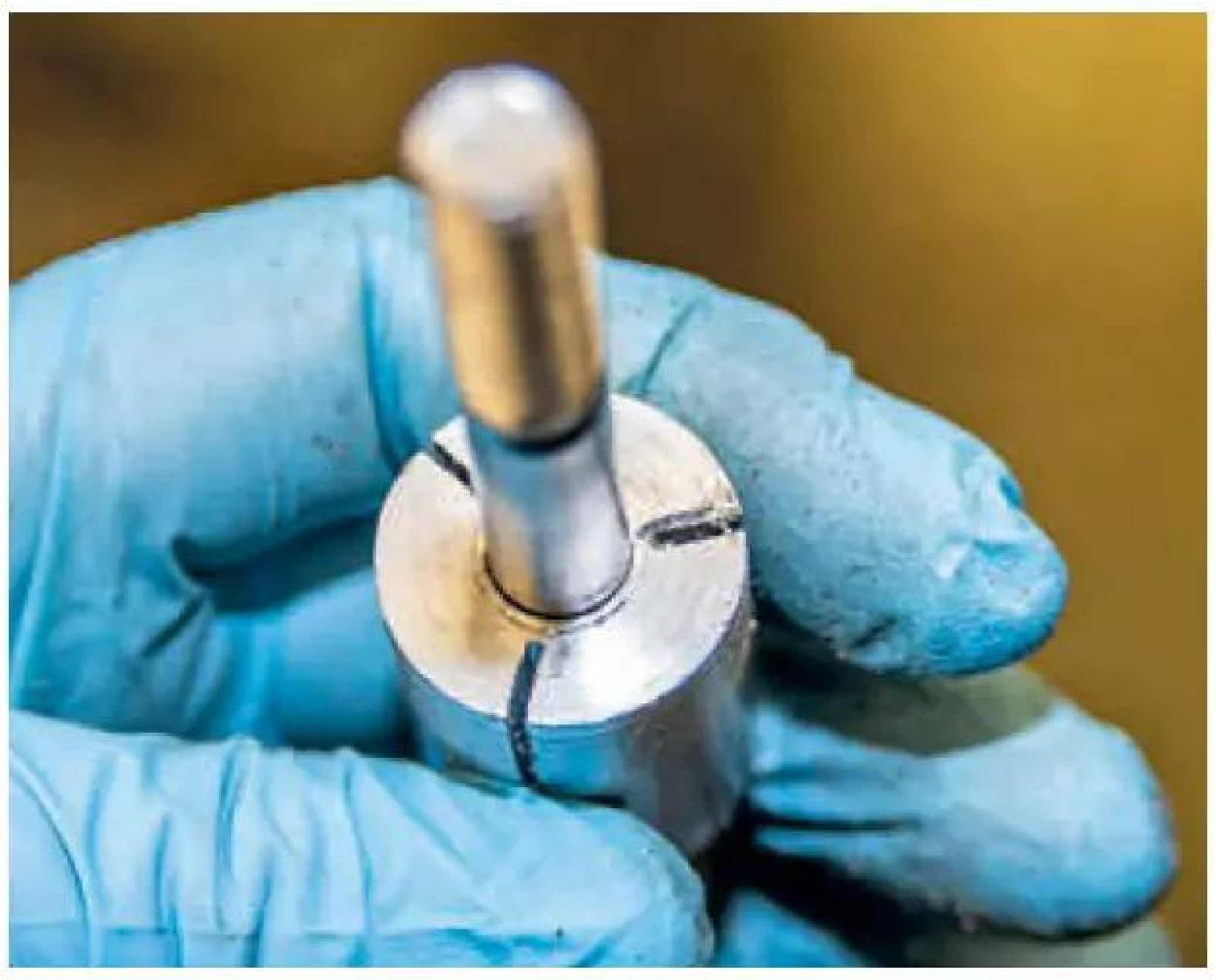
the frame and have lock nuts on the rear. This didn't work for my rear-sets so I decided, partly for aesthetic reasons, to use countersunk metric fine bolts. It is simply not possible to buy these 'off the shelf', so I had to buy some standard metric countersunk stainless bolts with enough plain section to allow me to cut off the standard metric coarse thread and replace it with a fine thread.

This presents a problem – how do you hold a countersink bolt in the lathe to cut a thread? The answer is to make a special collet. I dug out a piece of round aluminium bar stock slightly larger than the bolt head and faced both ends off in the lathe. Given I have just written a five-part series about using a lathe in CMM recently, you can refer to those pages on any terms I use about turning. Then I drilled and reamed out the centre to the size of the plain section of the bolt.The embryonic fixture was then clamped in the bench vice so that I could carefully make one hacksaw cut all the way though the outer wall and then another two at 120-degree angles most of the way through.

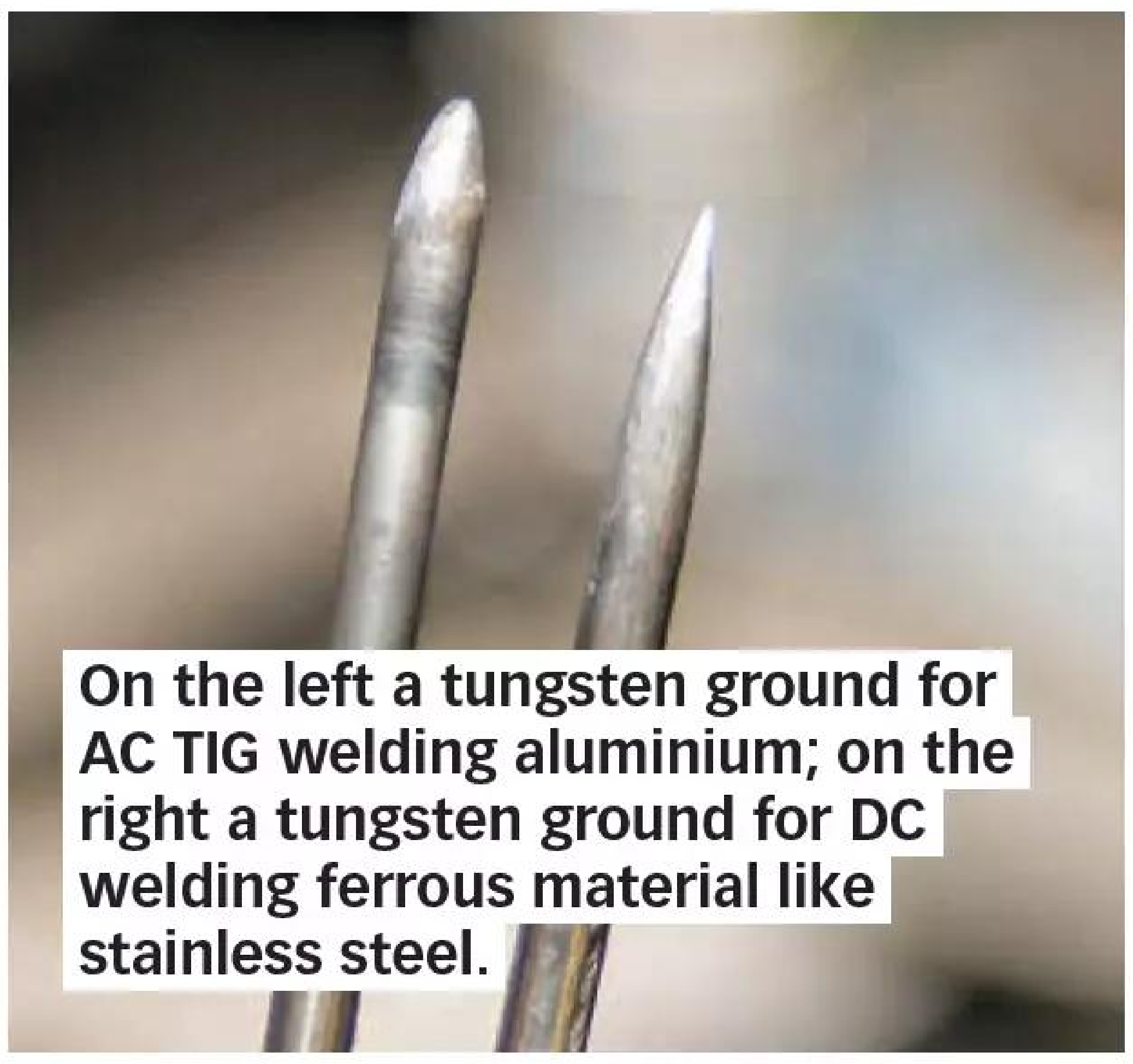
I measured how much of the bolt had to go through the frame and added the thickness of the mount plus the bosses I have yet to mention. I then 'blued up' the bolts and marked the new length with a height gauge on the surface plate and lopped off the excess with a hacksaw in the bench vice, allowing a bit for facing off in the lathe.

I fitted the bolt in its new collet in the three-jaw chuck of my lathe, faced off the end and cut a chamfer as a start for the ➲

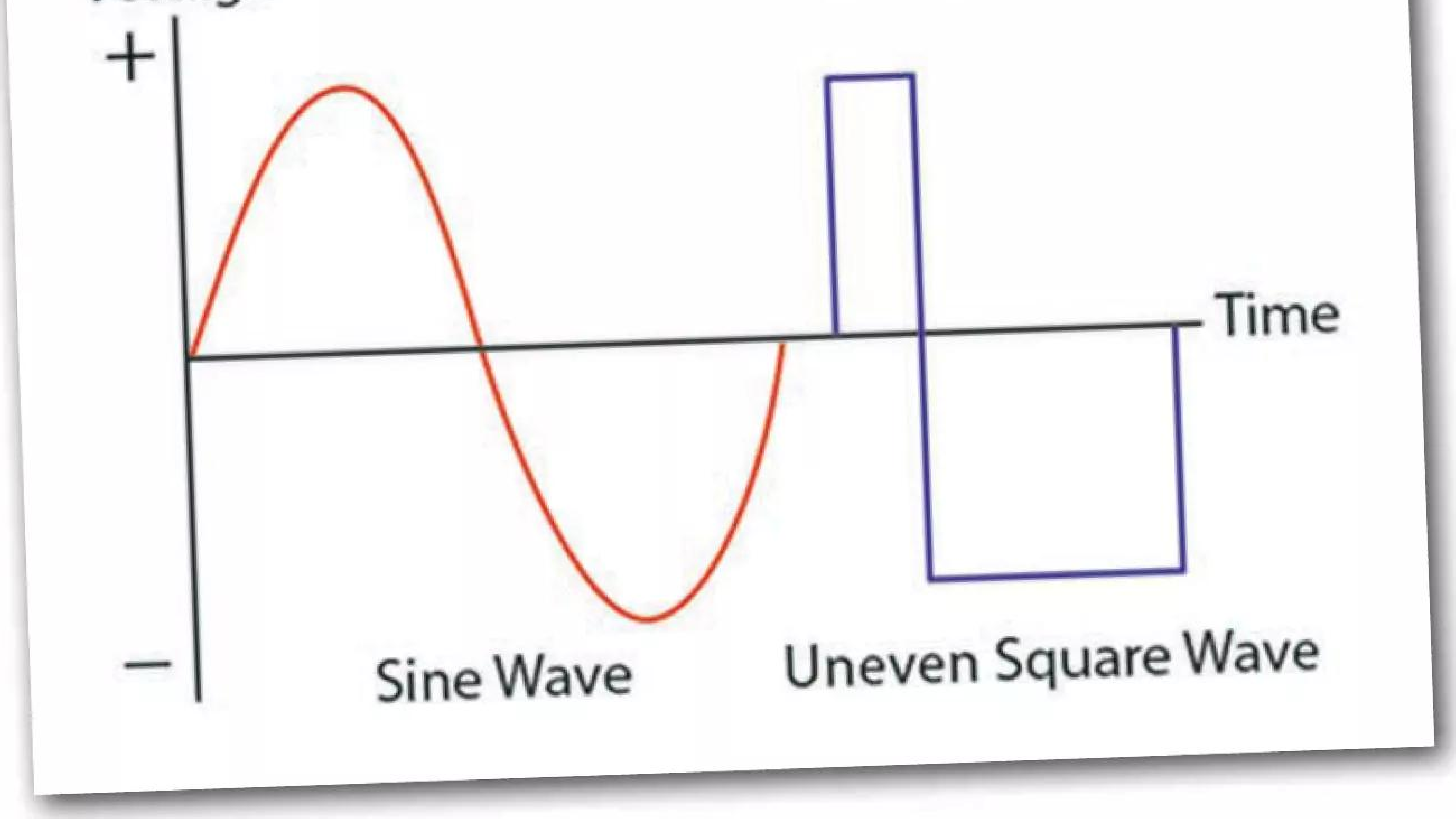
The internal burr from the saw cut was removed with a file.


The bolt fitted in the special home-brewed collet.

Using a steel rule to measure the amount of bolt required to pass through the frame.


On the left a tungsten ground for AC TIG welding aluminium; on the right a tungsten ground for DC welding ferrous material like stainless steel.

8.200
AC/DCTIG201
The panel of my TIG welder set-up for welding aluminium.



Drawing comparing AC wave forms. (See explanation on next page).

The aluminium boss bolted in place to be welded to the body of the rear-sets.

My first effort at making the foot-rest part in one piece.

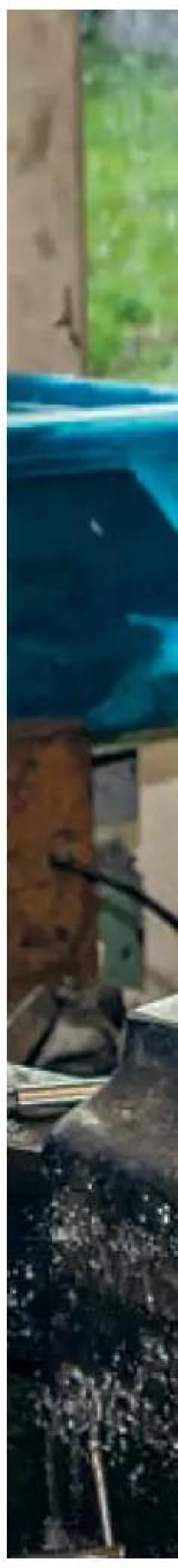
die. Then I fitted a suitable split die in my tail stock die holder and cut the threads as required. While on the lathe, I machined up the bosses that were to be fitted on the backs of the footrest mounts to bring them out from the frame. Then I bolted these up to the mounts so that I could weld them on with my AC/DC TIG welder. When welding aluminium, one uses A/C (Alternating Current).

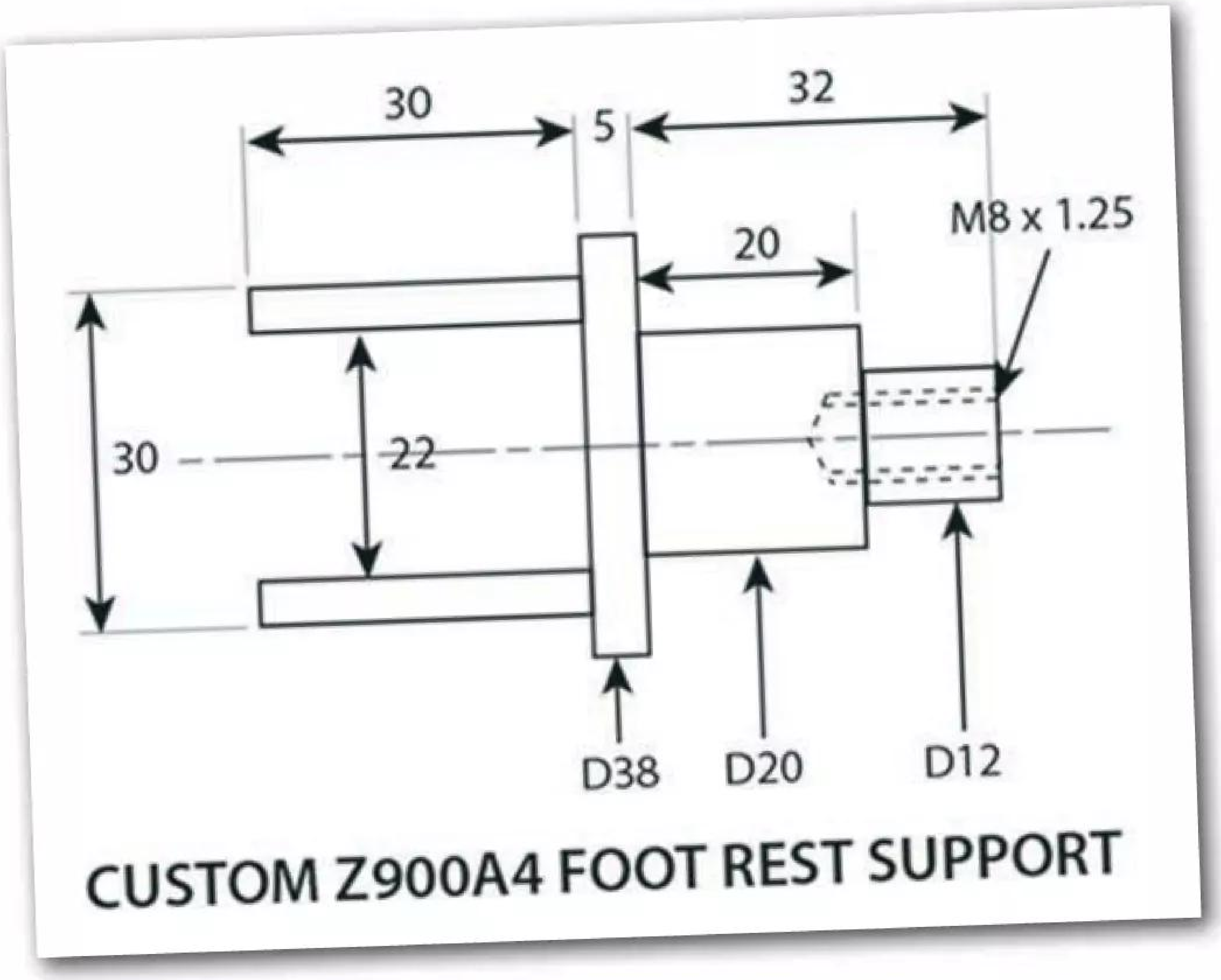
Alternating current, as the name might suggest, changes in polarity a number of times every second. That is called the frequency and is measured in cycles per second, or in modern metric parlance, Hertz. Mains electricity is hertz and the wave form is sinusoidal (Sine Wave).

When welding aluminium, the negative polarity is used to melt the metal, whilst the positive is used to blow through the hard oxide and blow other impurities out of the weld pool. The wave form is not even and often a square wave. See the diagram (previous page). This is a very simplistic explanation and a key to good welding is determining the best ratio of heating versus cleaning during the cycle. It is very much a balancing act and practice makes perfect.

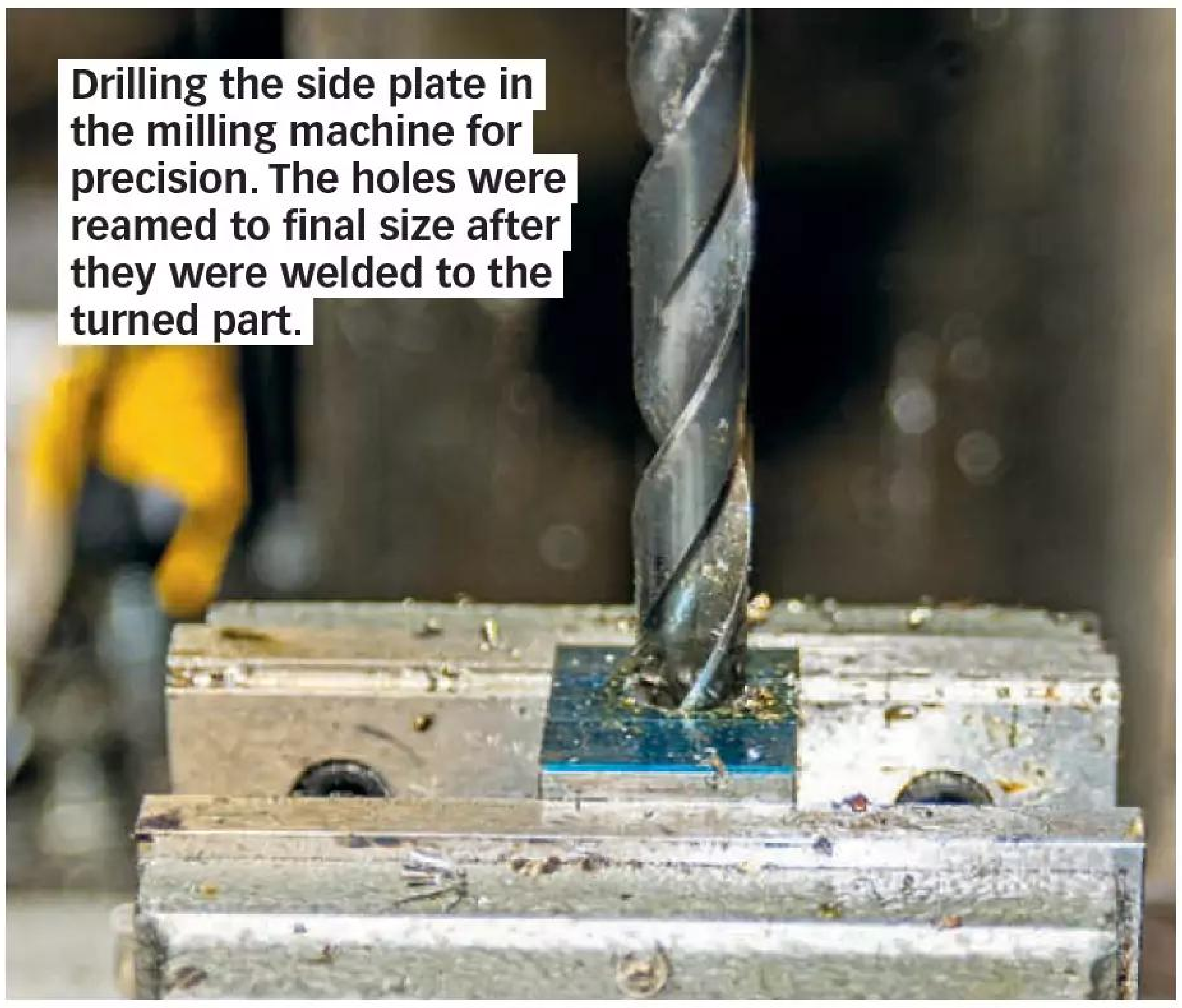
Welding manufacturers are always vying to create machines with the ultimate balances for perfect welding. Having a foot control to vary the current, like a car accelerator, I have found important to successful aluminium welding. Aluminium conducts heat away very fast, so you tend to need to give it plenty of welly to start with but then back off as the part heats up. When welding big castings, it pays to preheat the entire job before commencing. The material was quite thick here and I wanted good penetration, so I dialled in plenty of amps and plenty of pure argon for the shield. I reasonably neatly welded up the bosses and then filed away most of the visible welding and polished up the part ready for fitting.

Whilst doing any welding, I always use an air-fed welding mask. The fumes generated by welding are deeply unpleasant. The one I am using here was the subject of Tool of the Month a few years ago. It is from GYS, a French manufacturer of welders, etc. They kindly

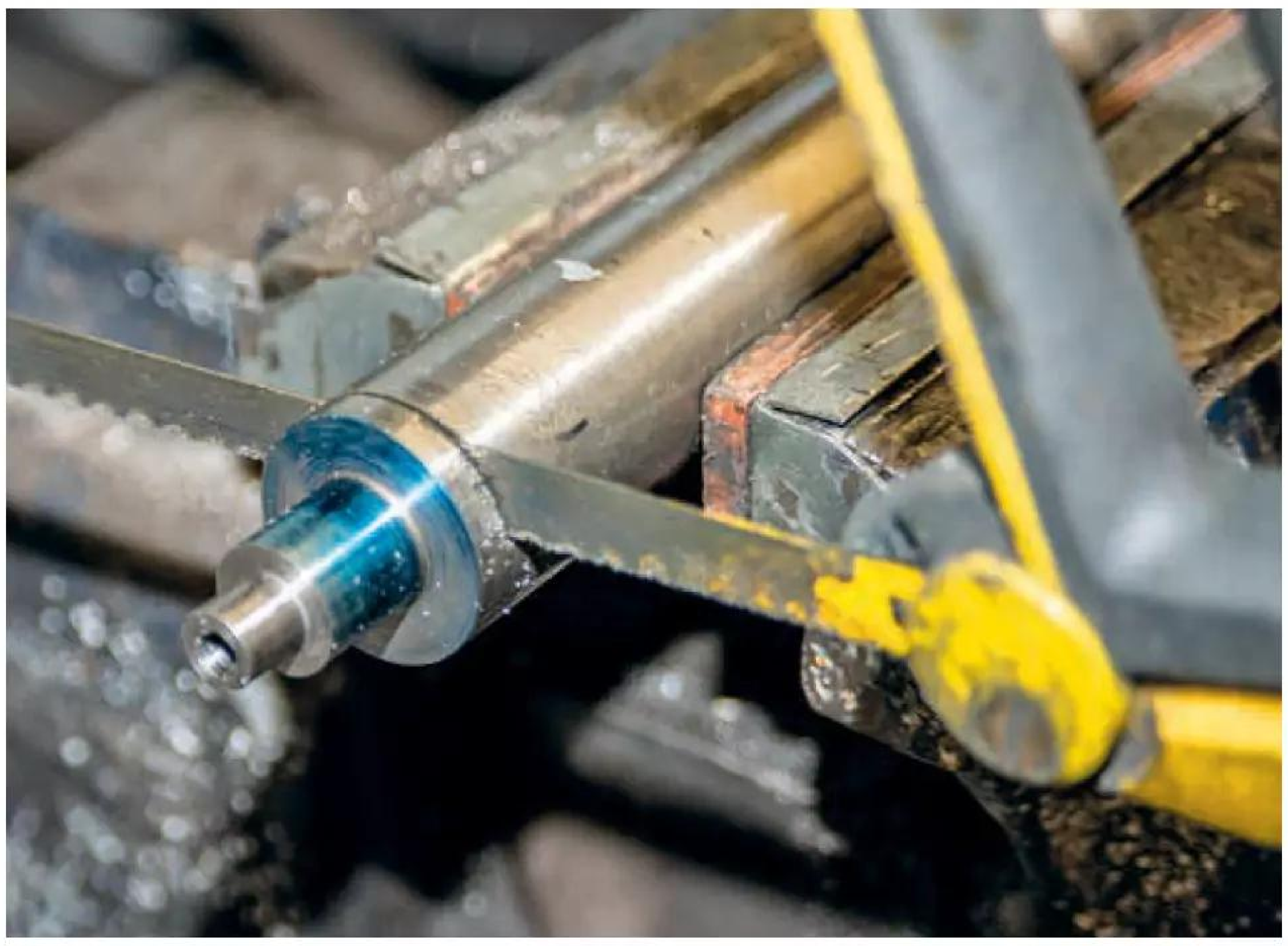


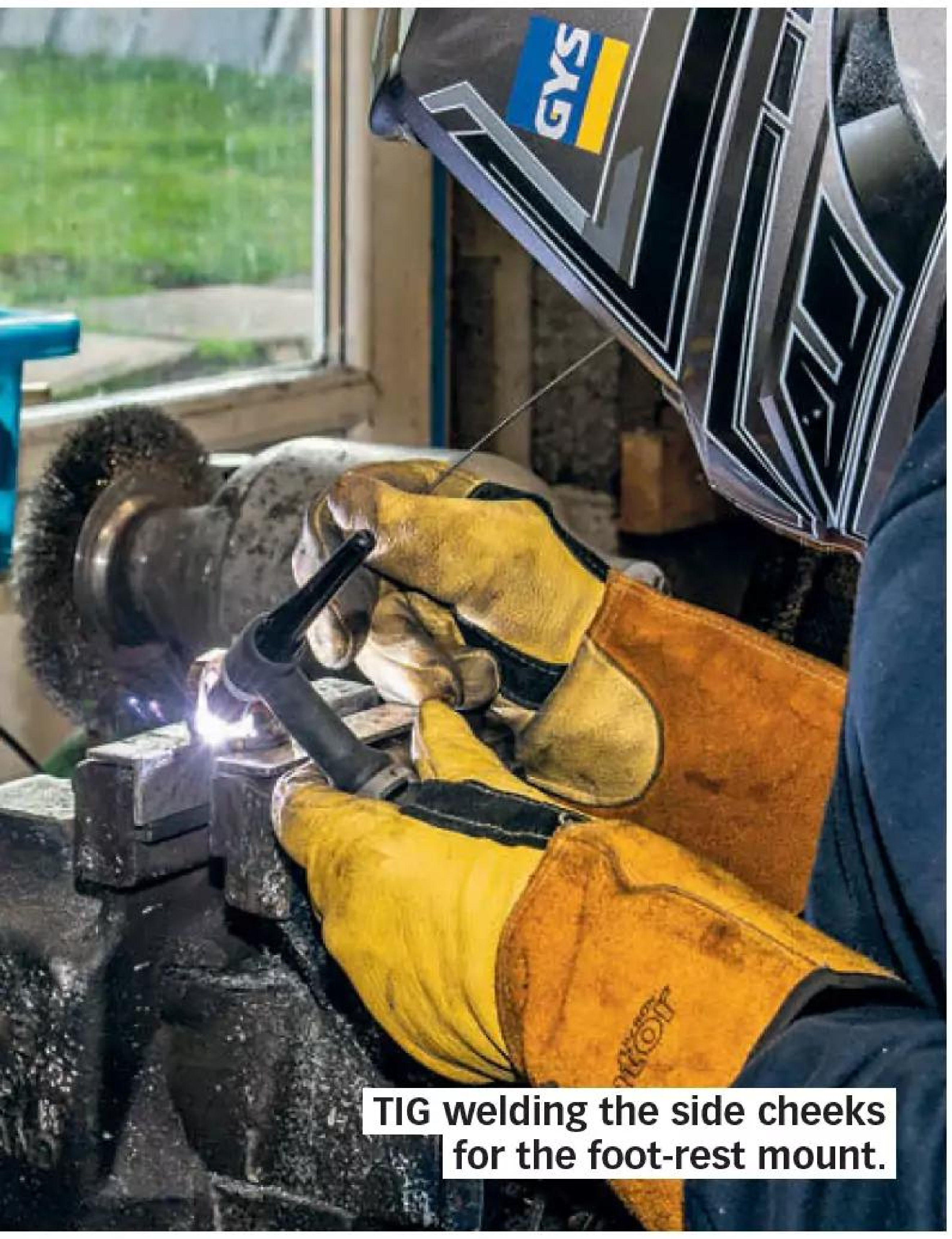


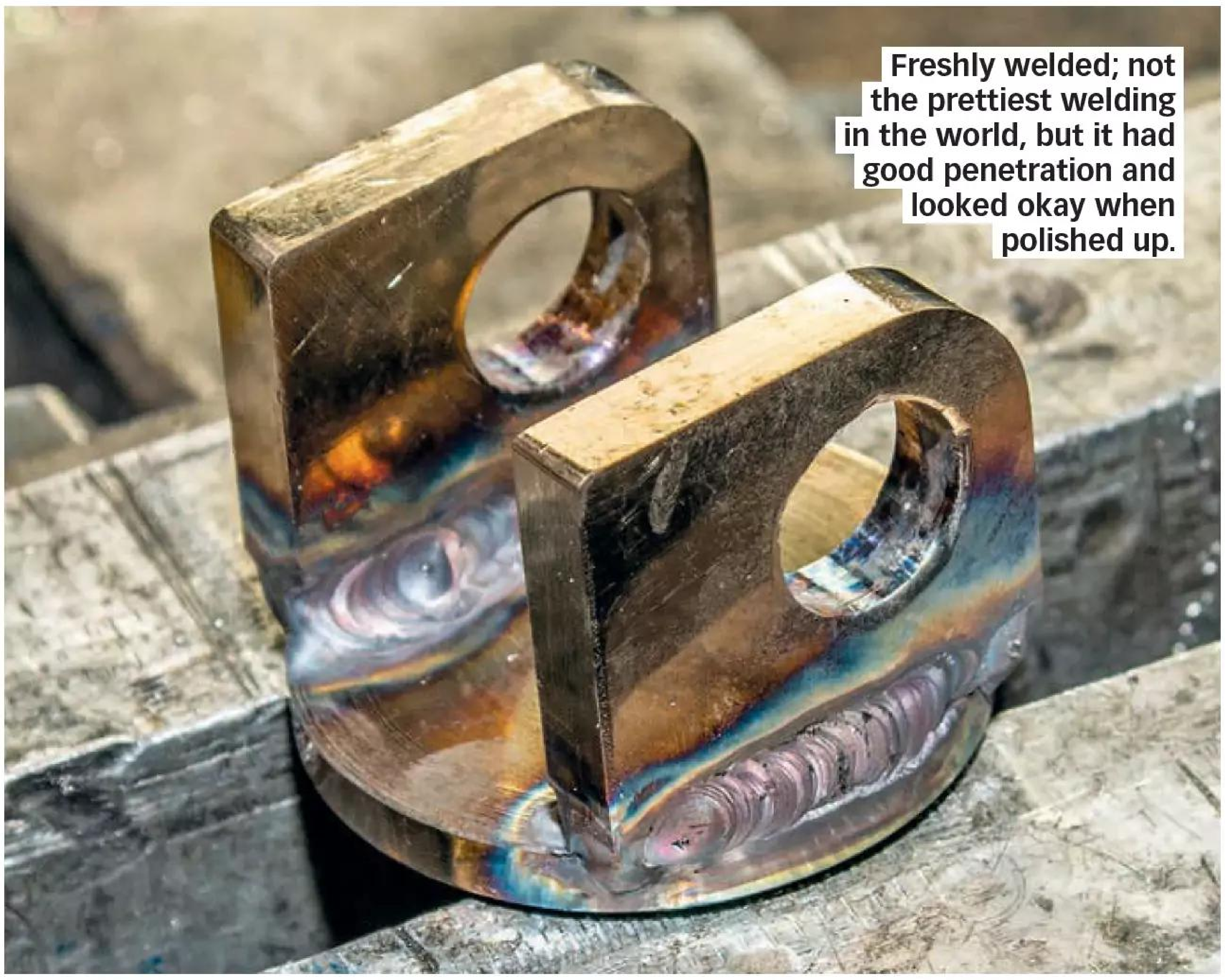
CUSTOM Z900A4 FOOT REST SUPPORT


Drilling the side plate in the milling machine for precision. The holes were reamed to final size after they were welded to the turned part.

The foot-rest mount cheeks bolted together so they could be shaped identically. Here I am linishing them.


This stainless was cut off in the Dark Ages, before I had a machine hacksaw.


TIG welding the side cheeks for the foot-rest mount.


Freshly welded; not the prettiest welding in the world, but it had good penetration and looked okay when polished up.

supplied me with one to test and, in the end, said I could keep it, for which I am eternally grateful.

When I was in my early 20s and welding in a workshop (before anyone had twigged that breathing in the thick smoke generated by burning fluxes for welding was bad for one's health), I had a TIA (Transient Ischemic Attack) or mini-stroke that cut my field of vision in half, leaving me blind on the right-hand side.

I did get quite a bit of vision back, but never all of it. Whether this was caused by smoking or welding without any ventilation or filtration, I shall never know. It is now illegal for a company to expect its employees to weld without ventilation and a mask feeding clean, filtered air.

Before I contacted GYS, I researched air-fed masks and realised that there were more than one level of filtration standard, but Health and Safety tended to insist on the better level for those welding for a living. I would now only use a respected brand of PPE (Personal Protection Equipment) to protect me. The difference in PPE quality was very much brought to our attention during the pandemic… Cheap PPE is still out there. My view is that if it's not good enough for industry, then I'll give it a swerve.

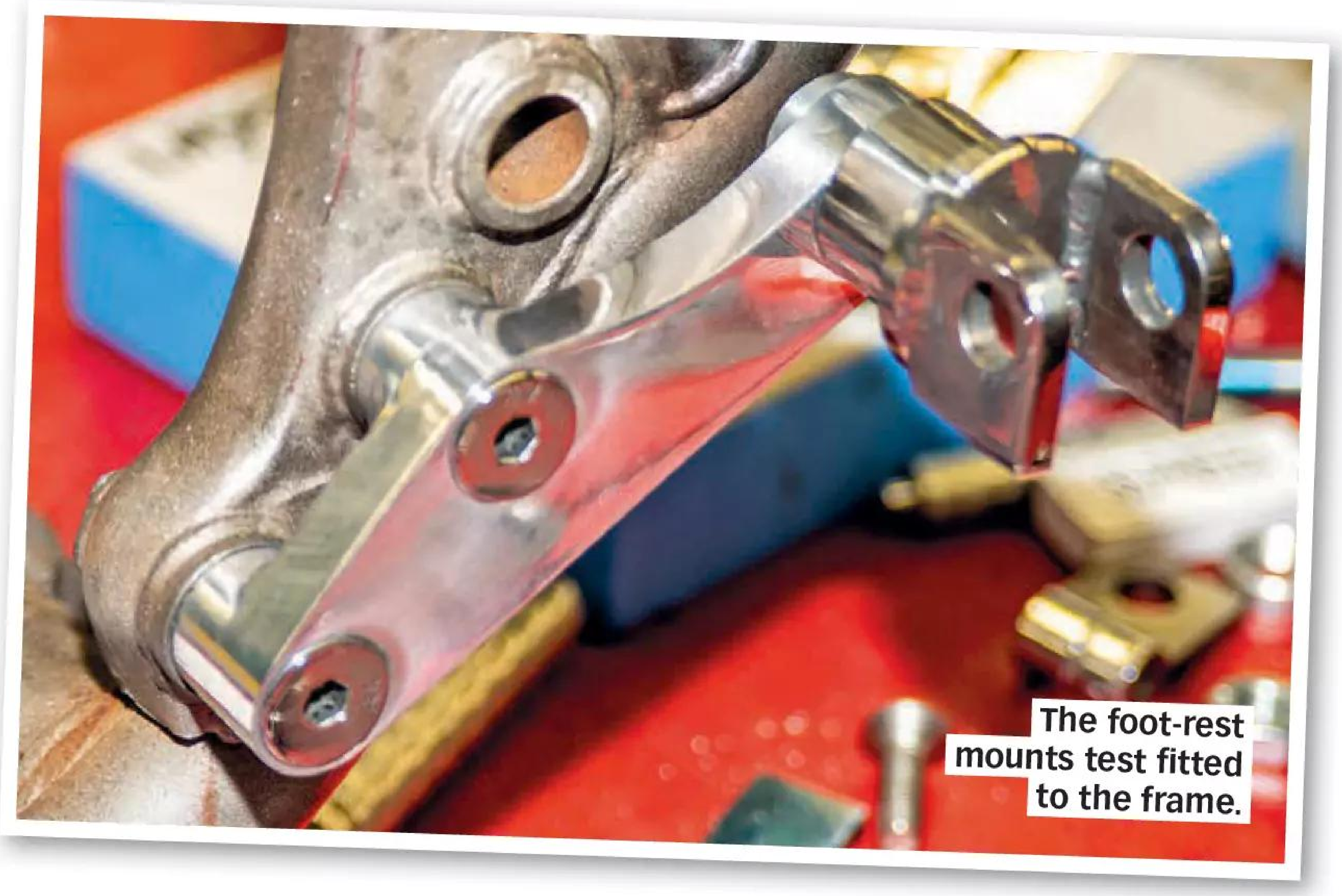
I tried to make the part that holds the footpeg itself – as shown in my diagram – in one part out of a piece of round stainless steel bar, initially turning the first part in the lathe and then machining the cheeks that support the footrest in my baby milling machine. Sadly, I have no room for a lovely Bridgeport milling machine. I can't remember what I got wrong, but I got one dimension wrong and it was such a huge ball-ache to mill out the square cheeks on my little hobby milling machine from 316 marine grade stainless steel that I couldn't face doing it again, so I decided to remake the turned parts on the lathe and then fabricate the cheeks and TIG weld them on. I made each cheek out of flat 316 grade stainless bar.

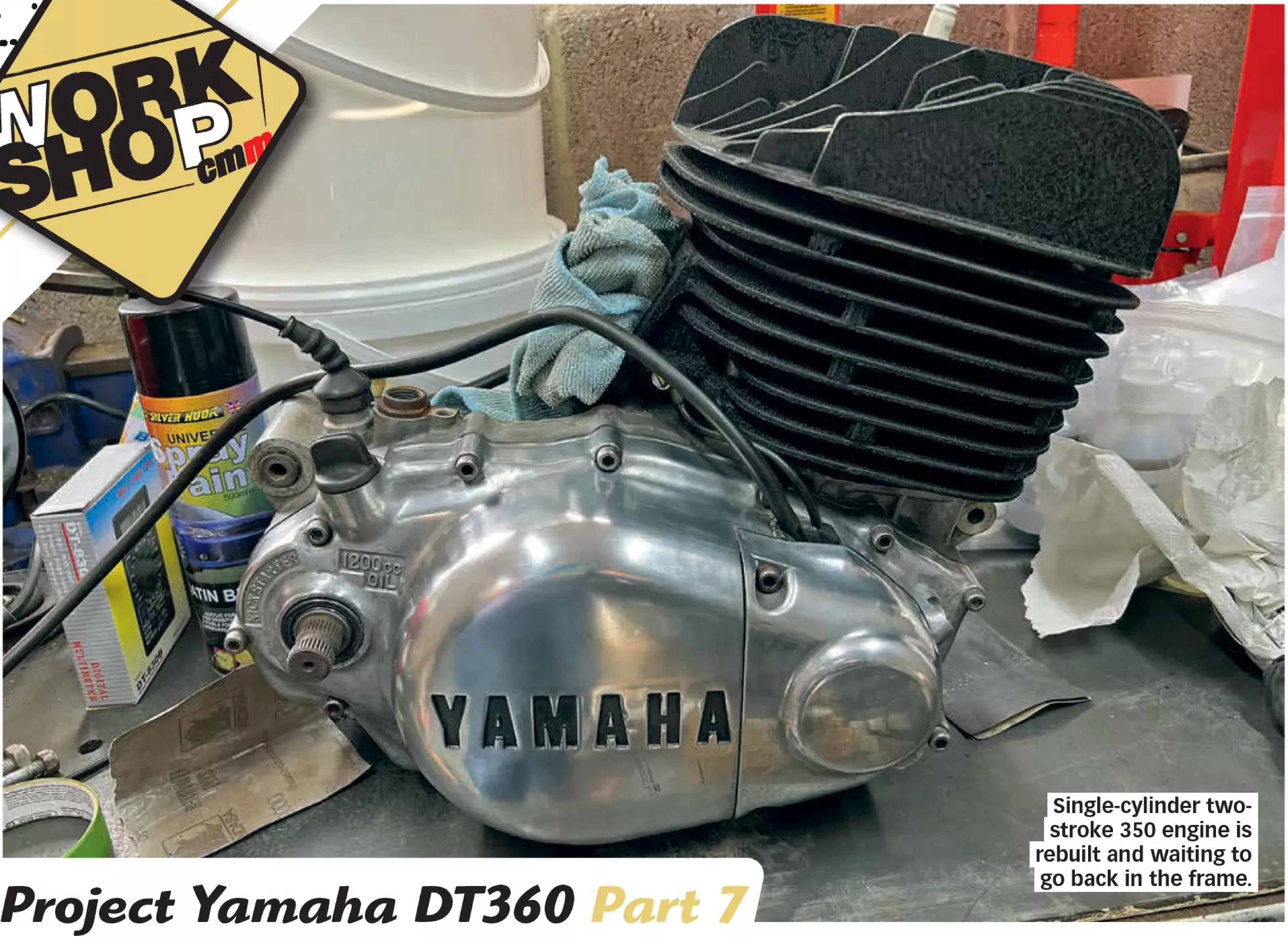
The position of the hole for the peg pivot was critical as it defines where the peg locks horizontally when riding, so I drilled it in the milling machine, very slightly under final size.

With all four plates drilled and sized, I bolted them together and formed the radius for the peg hinging clearance on the belt sander, constantly checking the shape and size using radius gauges. I went down through the grades of belts before polishing all the parts. Then carefully and with a reasonable level of precision I clamped the side plates to the turned parts in such a way as to resist movement when welding.

Stainless is particularly prone to moving and distorting during the welding process. I welded them in stages, initially tacking them whilst they were all clamped up, but couldn't get the TIG torch in to do the runs whilst the supports were there. This didn't help with very pretty welds, but the parts were properly stuck with good penetration in the correct place, which was more important. I didn't want my pegs falling off while riding! Once welded, I ran a reamer through the holes for final size.

Next time: Finishing the foot-rests. **cmm**


The foot-rest mounts test fitted to the frame.



Single-cylinder two-stroke 350 engine is rebuilt and waiting to go back in the frame.

WORDS AND PICS: WILL HOLMAN

## Project Yamaha DT360 Part 7

# Mission Creep

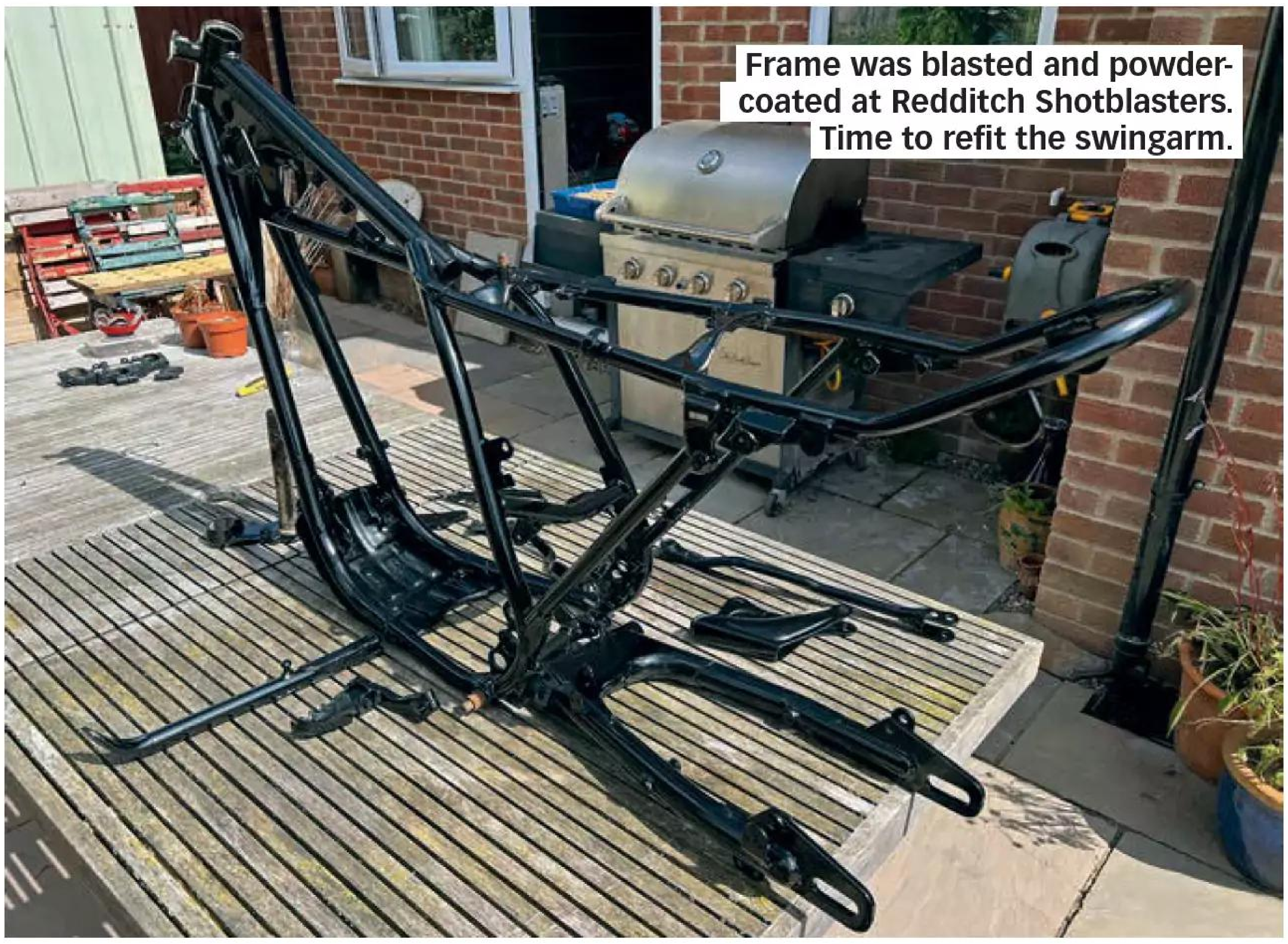
It's all got out of hand, says Will Holman, as he battles to get his two-stroke dream out of the garage and on to the potholes!

**I'm not quite sure how this happened. The beginning's easy enough – a bottle of red wine, an absent wife and an internet connection led to the somewhat rash purchase of a 1974 Yamaha DT360 in need of a bit of TLC.**

But I had a plan to get it running, change the tyres and ride off into the smoky sunset. It's fair to say that plan went about as well as Apollo 13. But although those guys never made it to the Moon they did make it home again, and I'm hoping the home stretch is at least in sight now, albeit maybe with the help of some decent binoculars.

Redditch Shotblasting have made the frame look at least as good as new, possibly better, and I've enjoyed the process of putting that back together.

I've replaced the plastic swingarm bushes with some bronze ones, which are cheaper and better, so that wasn't a



Frame was blasted and powder-coated at Redditch Shotblasters. Time to refit the swingarm.

Swingarm had plastic bushes originally. Will bought bronze replacements.

Swingarm pivot tube was pitted so Will filled the damage with JB Weld epoxy resin.

A trip to a mate with a lathe had the pivot tube back up to spec.

The inside of the swingarm needed some cleaning out so that the new bushes fitted snugly.

A bit of grease and a few smacks with a rubber mallet saw the bushes slide in.

Far better than the plastic originals and as long as that nipple sees grease regularly, they should last forever.

The shiny swingarm pivot bolt is a result of some home-plating action, which we'll detail in a future instalment.

Will's 1977 XS650 is proving too reliable for his tastes, so he intends to take remedial action.

difficult decision. I'm really not sure why Yamaha chose plastic as the original material, but they were clearly wedded to the idea as my 1977 XS650 has them, too. I suppose the fact that on that bike they exhibit no wear at nearly 50 years old and with 16k miles on the clock means plastic might sound like a crap idea, but actually be fine in practice. All the same, the shiny bronze ones look, well, shiny. And shiny is nice.

The tube the bushes sat on was pitted. New ones are unavailable and good used ones cost way more than a hollow tube of mild steel has any right to, so I cleaned it up with a wire cup brush in an angle grinder and then mixed up some JB Weld to fill the pits.

A quick spin in my mate's lathe brought it back to spec, and in it went. If you're wondering why the long bolt that holds the swingarm on is looking so shiny, take out a subscription to CMM now, as a future episode of this winding saga will detail my use of a home-plating kit, which provided hours of endless amusement, and has left my workbench looking like a chemical dump. But if you have old rusty bits that aren't easily replaced, one of these kits is a godsend.

After I'd refitted the fork yolk bearings, I grabbed the forks themselves and quickly ➲

## Will's 1977 XS650

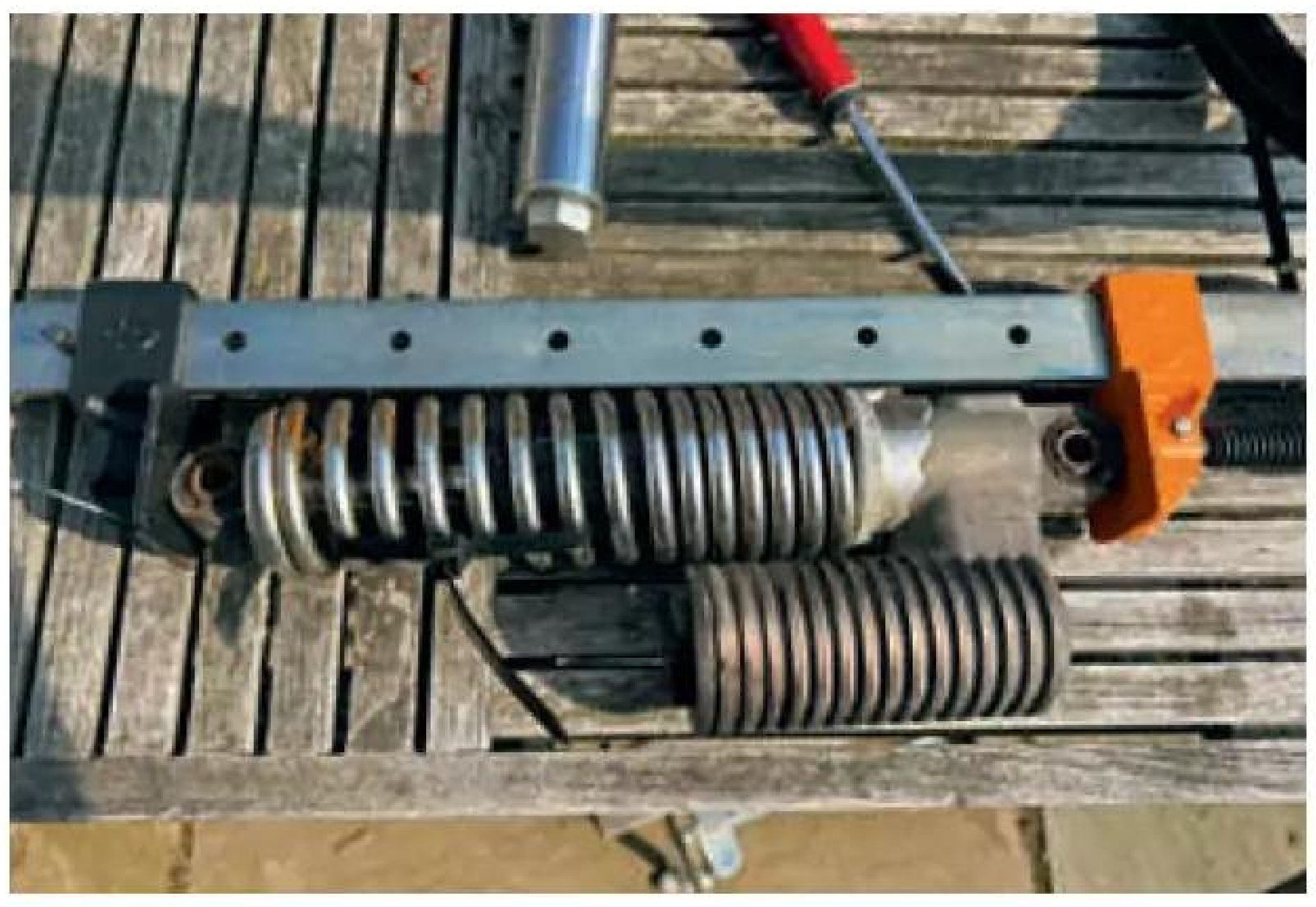
**I don't write about this bike much because all I ever do is enjoy it. Fifty years and 16k miles seems nothing for something so well screwed together – and I should know. It replaced a Triumph T140 of similar vintage and mileage, which bits fell off of every time I rode it.**

**This kind of jump-on-and-go reliability won't do. I need more spannering action to keep me interested, so I have a plan to stop the XS working so well. I'm going to fit a 750 big-bore kit. Great though the 650 parallel twin is, it does lack a little torque.**

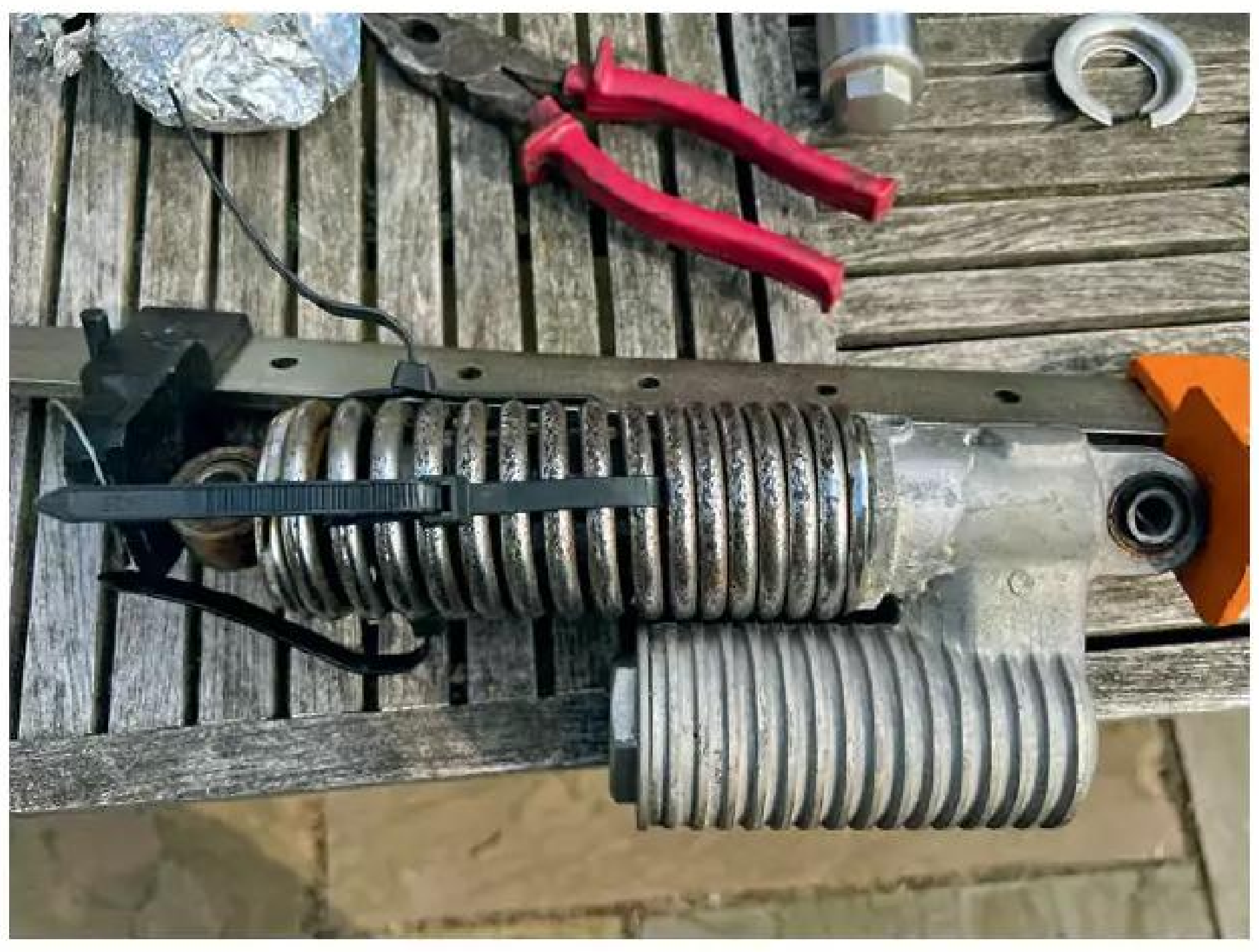
**Apparently, Yamaha always intended to take the engine up 100cc but never got round to it as they concentrated on developing more powerful multi-cylinder models, leaving the old Brit classic inspired XS as it was. But thanks to their foresight the crankcases can accept 750 barrels and pistons without modification, so it's a bolt-on job.**

**Fitting the big-bore kit should be pretty straightforward, but I'll then no doubt spend all next summer trying to get the jetting in the carbs right to suit the new capacity. That should keep me happily busy.**

Back on the frame and crying out for those spring/damper assemblies.



They needed to come apart as the push-rods were slightly pitted. This is how you shouldn't do it.



Huge cable ties provided the extra few mm of crush to enable disassembly.

realised I couldn't simply bolt them back on. Annoyingly, the pitting that I ignored earlier in this process had failed to eliminate itself, so I had to accept that I needed the help of another specialist, this time to rechrome and grind the fork tubes. Best check the rear damper plungers while I'm at it. Also pitted.

They're pretty funky looking dampers on the 360, with an oil reservoir built into them, so although I could get some non-standard replacement spring and shock assemblies easily and cheaply enough, I really wanted to keep the originals as they're very distinctive and add to the bike's overall retro charm. The plungers aren't anything like as badly rusted as the fork legs, but you don't need much pitting to screw the seals up, so I set about getting the things apart.

The Haynes Manual started going on about special tools almost straightaway, so I put that down and tried to work out how to compress the rear springs enough to release the tension on the cups that they sit in and hence let me remove them. What follows is not a recommendation, it's just what I did with the tools I have. So bear with…

Sash clamps are carpenters' tools for clamping wooden assemblies together while glue dries. They're also, it turns out, pretty good for compressing Yamaha DT360 rear shocks. Pretty good, but not quite good enough. Although I could get the springs crunched up and the cups flapping about, I still didn't have enough clearance to actually get them out.

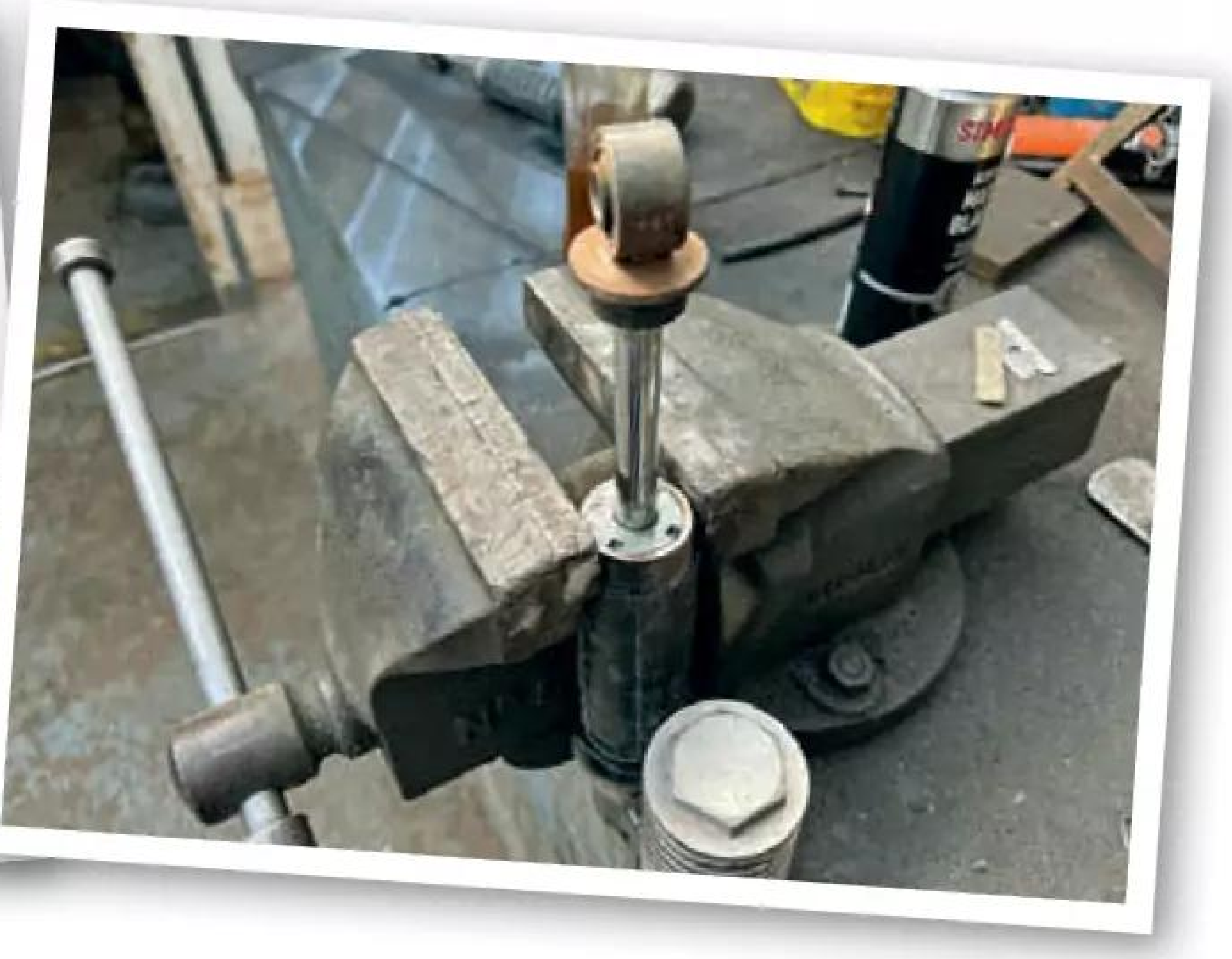
In the end I used a combination of the sash clamps and some armed robbery spec cable ties to keep everything under tension while I fiddled the cups out. Then it was just a matter of finding somebody stupid enough to cut the cable ties and release the clamps. Nobody volunteered, so gingerly I did it myself.

As I said, I'm not for a minute suggesting anyone else does this, it's just what I did, and it was a little hairy at times, but with all my teeth intact I moved on to getting the damper's internals out. There's a little collar with four holes in it threaded into the damper body. Again, special tools were mentioned. Again, my special tools store came up with nothing, so, after soaking the collars in freeing oil, I used a small punch to start knocking them round. One came out easily – the other sat tight and flicked the vees at me. I doused it in more freeing oil and left it overnight.

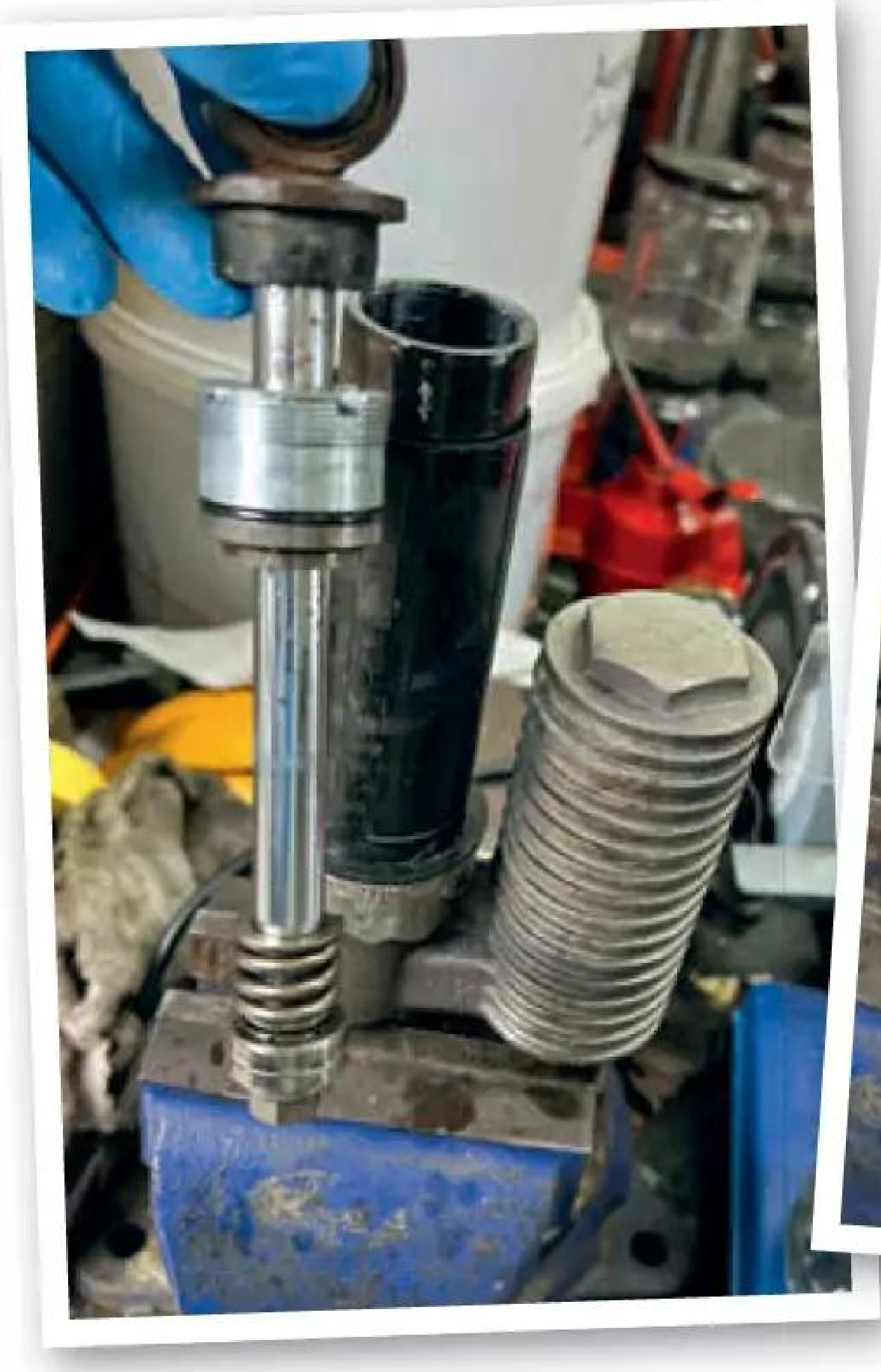
The next morning it started to surrender. However, although it would move a couple of millimetres, it would then go tight again, so I had to keep knocking it back and forth until eventually, about an hour later, finally it stopped fighting and I could unscrew it from the housing. It doesn't look any different to the one that came out easily. No idea.

The front forks were a doddle in comparison, and the Haynes Manual didn't mention any special tools. They're quite badly pitted so will need a bit more work than the rear damper plungers, but Andy Morgan at Pitted Forks in Luton (A. M. Philpot to the masses) said neither would be a problem for his firm, so off they went. I await their return with some excitement as with the forks and rear dampers on I'll be able to refit the wheels, and that obviously means the bike is nearly finished. At the very least I'll be able to push it around the garden making ring, ding-ding noises. *cmm*

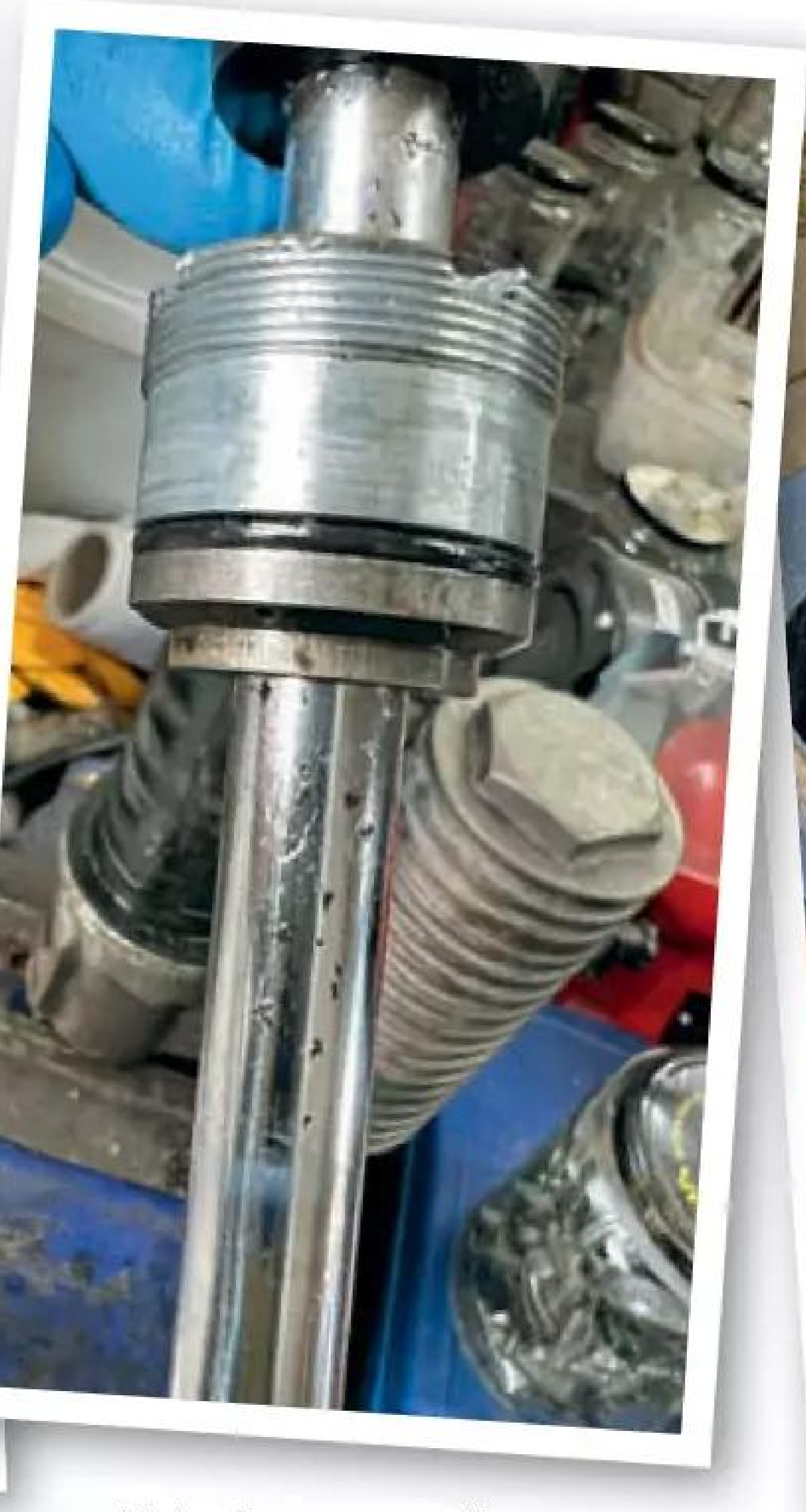
Springs off, time to get the damper internals out.



Collar requires special tool which Will didn't have. A punch did the trick – eventually.



Pitting on damper plunger would destroy the seals rapidly.



It didn't actually look this bad before Will took it apart, but he's glad he did.

Front fork tubes are pretty bad and will need building up with hard chrome.

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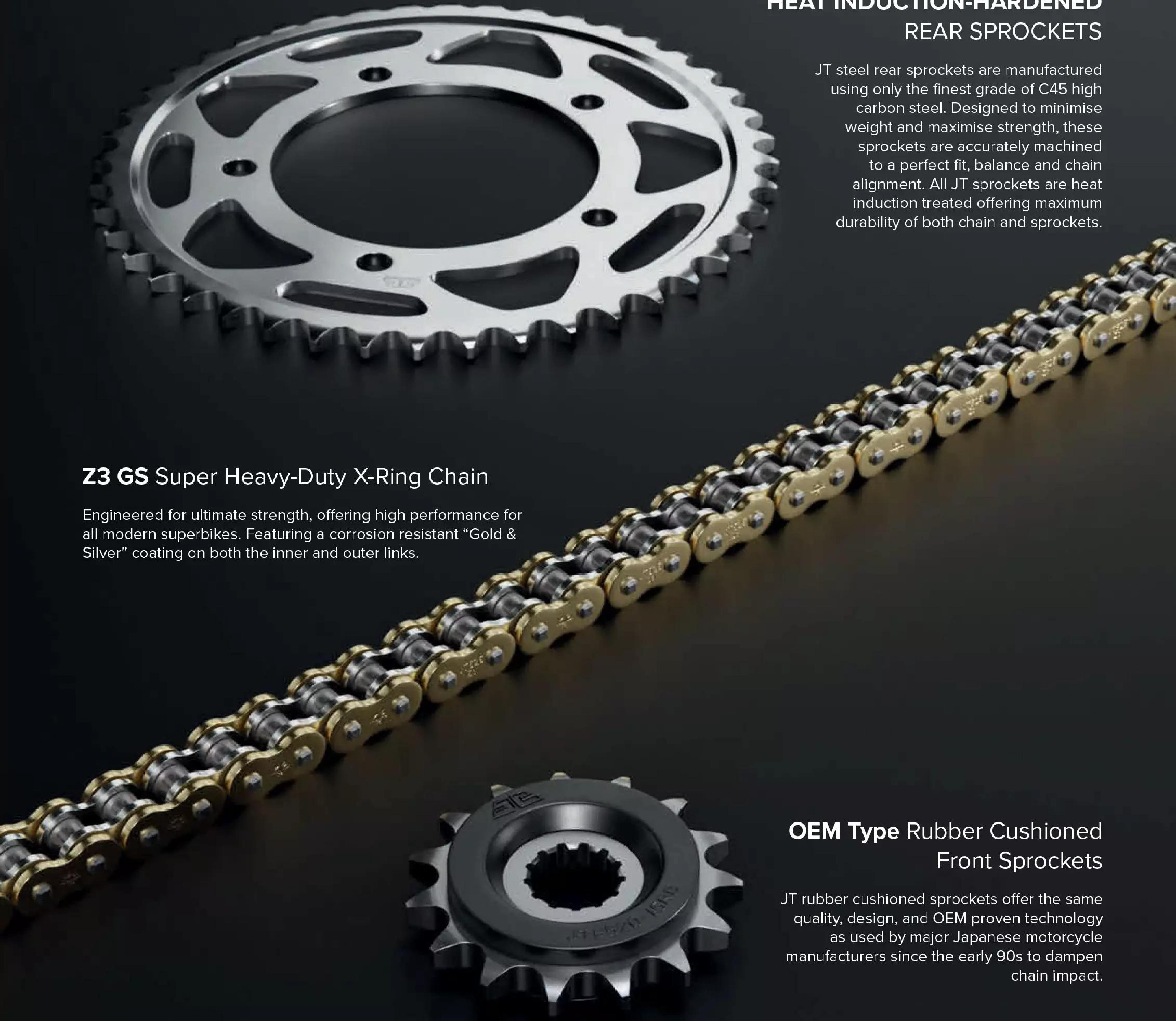

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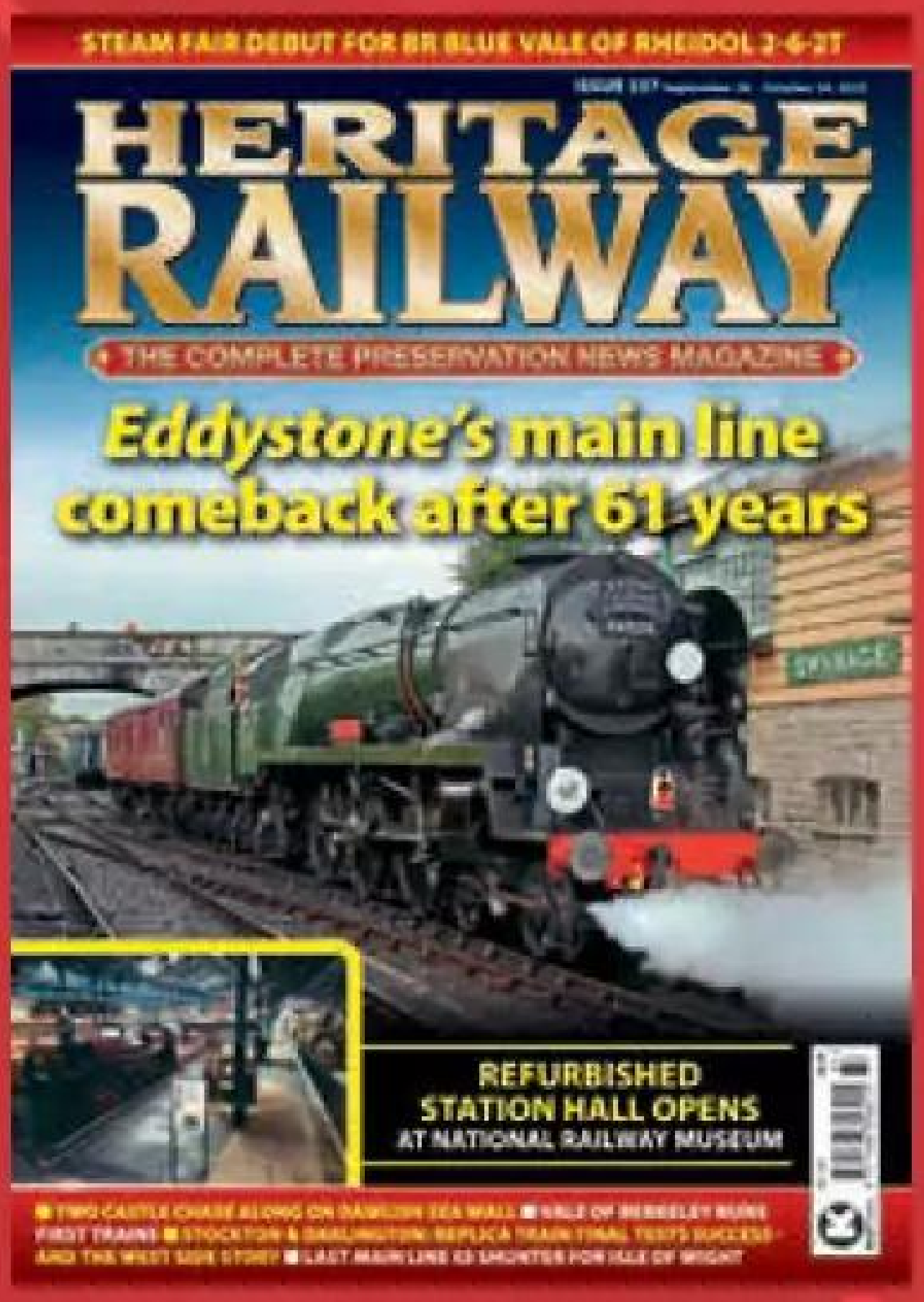
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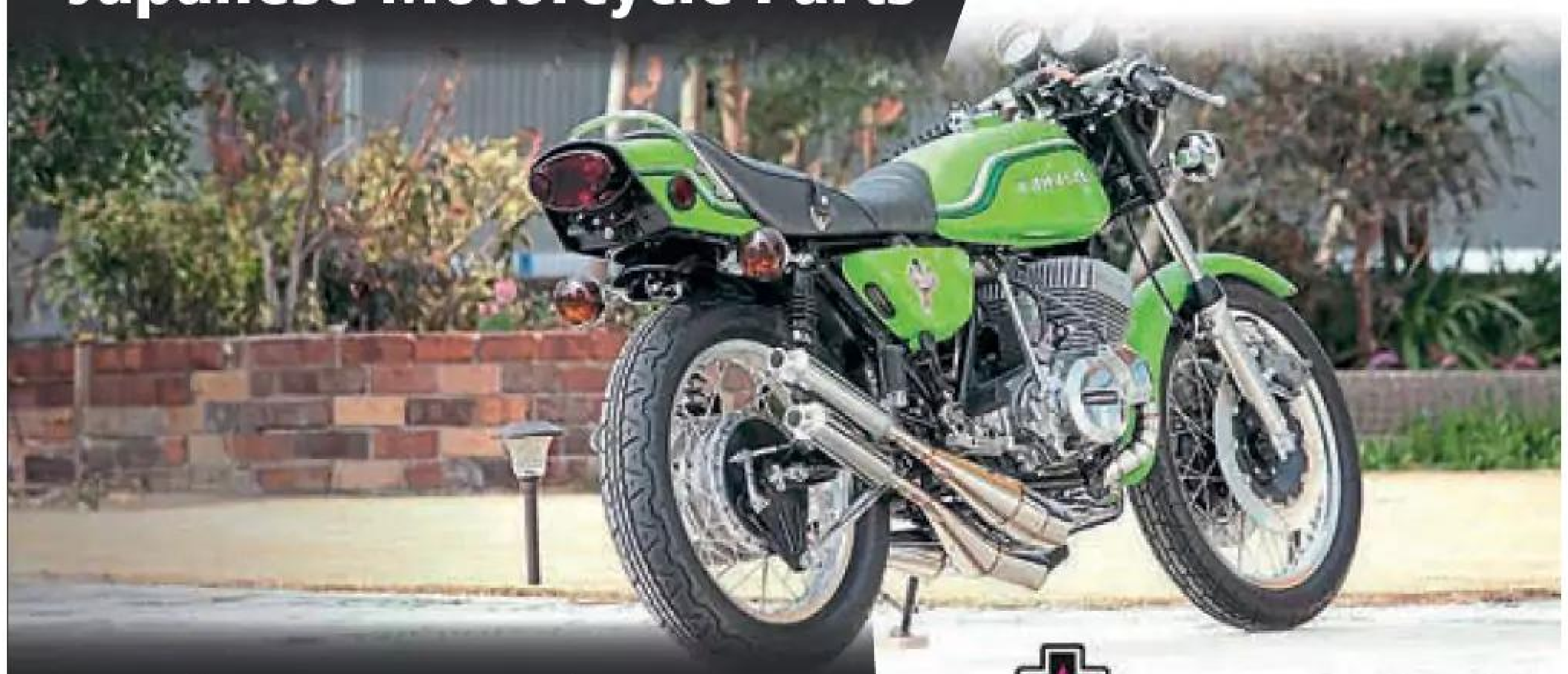

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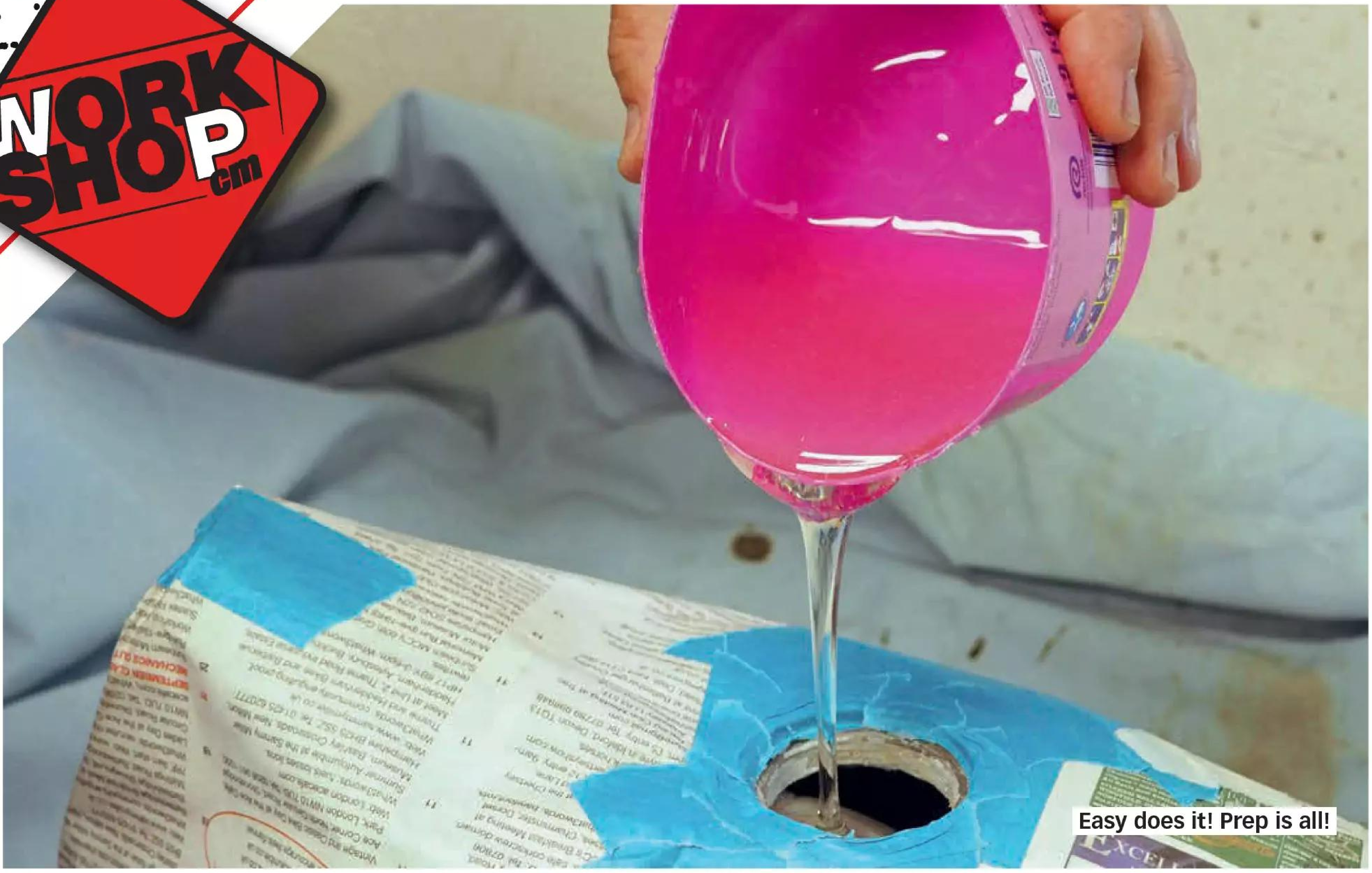
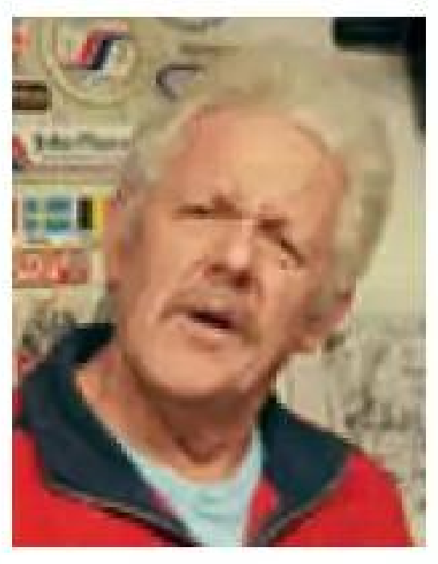


Easy does it! Prep is all!

WORDS AND PICS: STEVE COOPER

# Tank warfare!

Fibre-glass tanks and pump petrol don't go well together, but Major Steve Cooper has a battleplan!

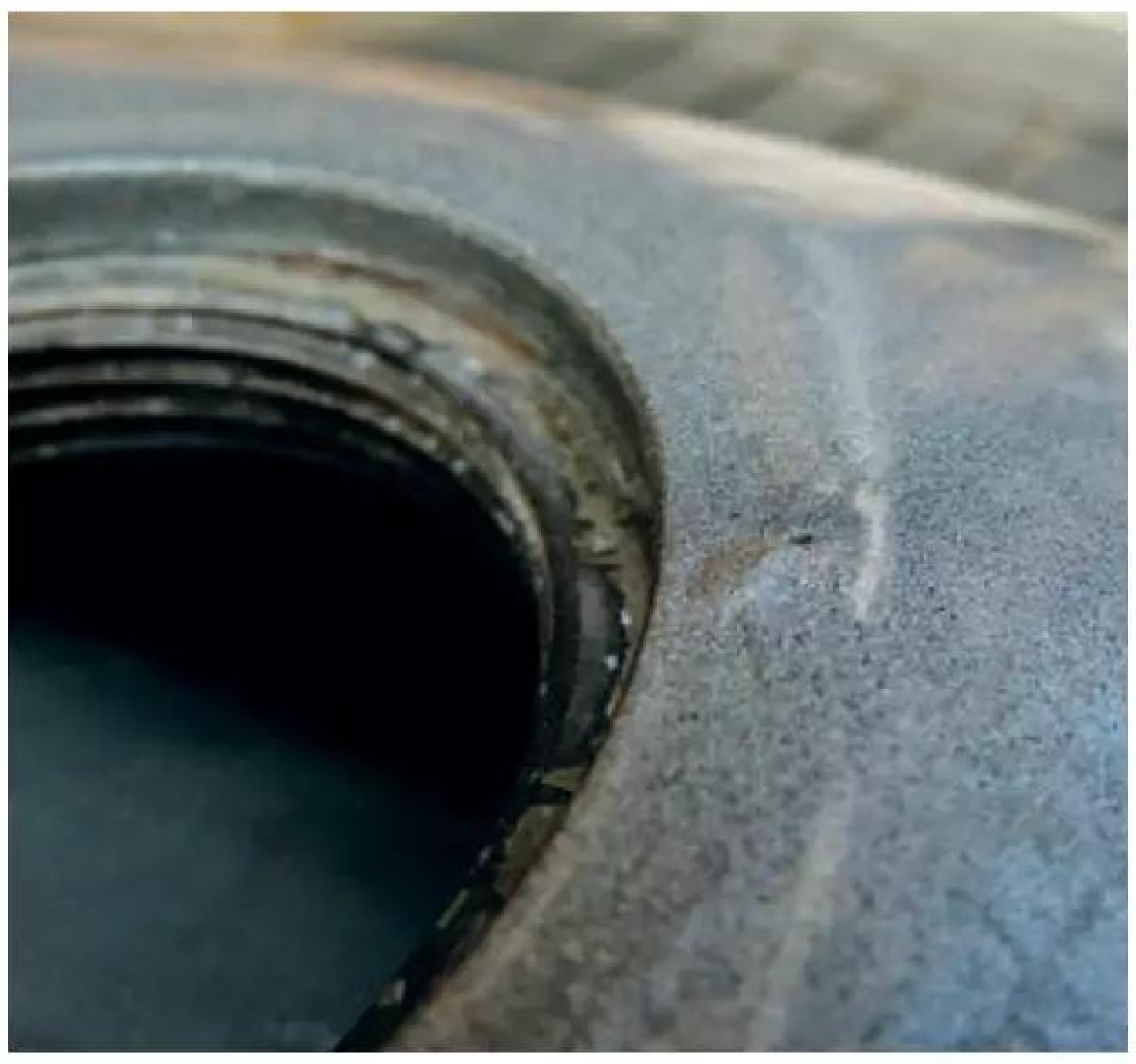


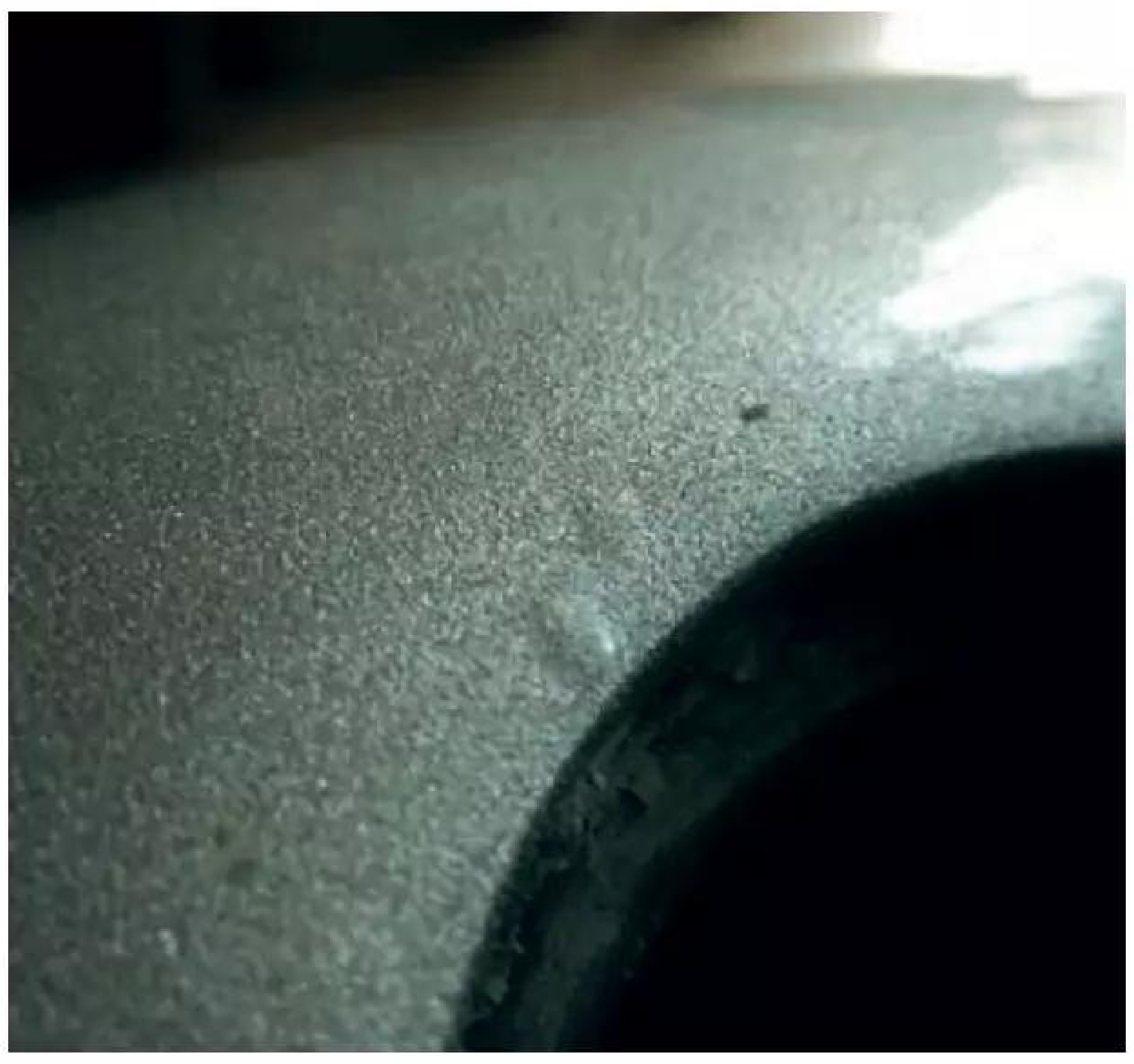
**Tank liners – some swear by them, some swear at them. But regardless, they are effectively obligatory if you have a bike with a fibre-glass tank.**

Unless you can afford to run one of the various specialist fuels out there, you'll need to be protecting that resin laminate container above your engine. And even with some of the 'posh petrol' out there, owners are still reporting issues.

Simplistically (and it's not just ethanol), the numerous components in petrol are attacking the resin in fibre-glass – think biking's version of woodworm and you won't be far wrong. The chemicals in the fuel soften the previously solid material and gradually turn it into a gooey horror story. The more fuel you run through the tank and/or the longer it stays in contact with it, the worse the damage becomes.

The fuel tank we have here is a 1970s tank from a stunning Bultaco Astro that once used to hurtle around the flat-tracks of America. Restored and recently fired up, modern fuel has made its presence known by starting to raise the previously pristine red and silver paint. The damage to the vivid scarlet proved to be difficult to capture on camera but you can see the blisters on the silver around the filler neck well enough (see pics above.) This, unfortunately, demonstrates how the fuel vapours have worked their way through the resin.





If further damage is to be avoided then action needs to be taken or a piece of motorcycling heritage is going to be damaged irreparably.

The cleaning of fibre-glass tanks seems to be a subject of hot debate online, but all agree the first task is to drain off any remaining fuel and allow the tank to vent until it's dry. There are some that advocate the use of acetone as a cleaning medium, but acetone also dissolves cured resins so that seems counter-intuitive. In fact, putting any hydrocarbon-based solvent seems, frankly, mad, so we've gone for an all-aqueous approach. ➲

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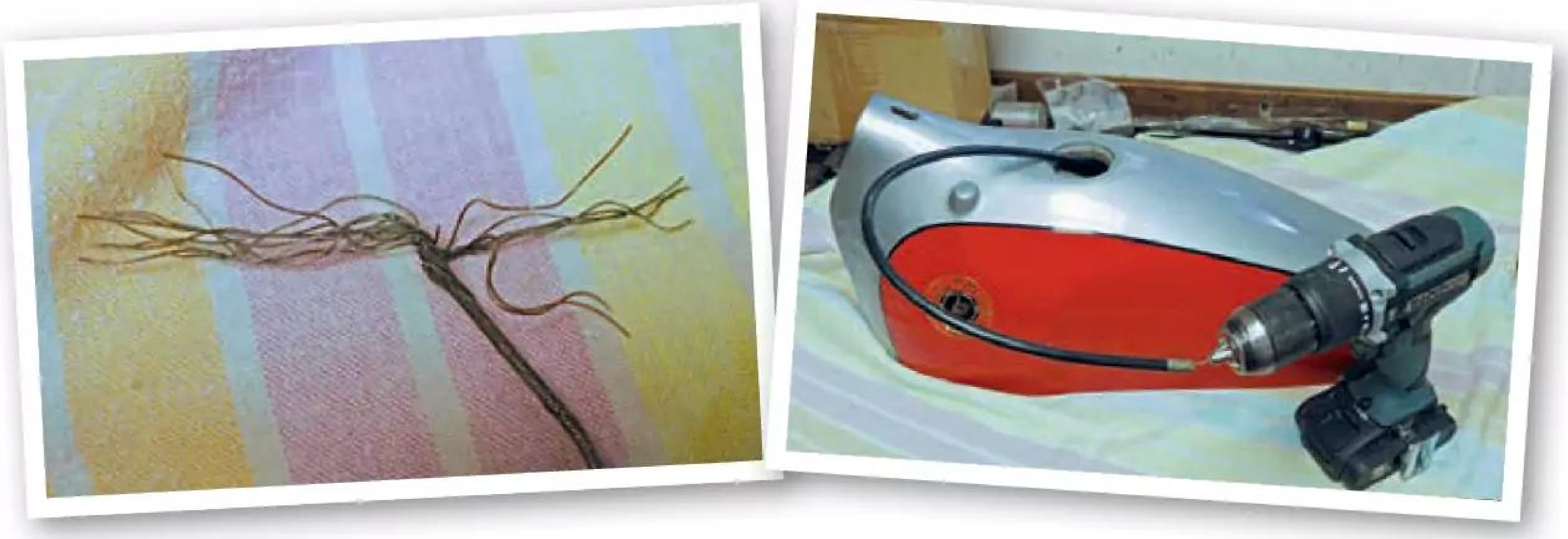
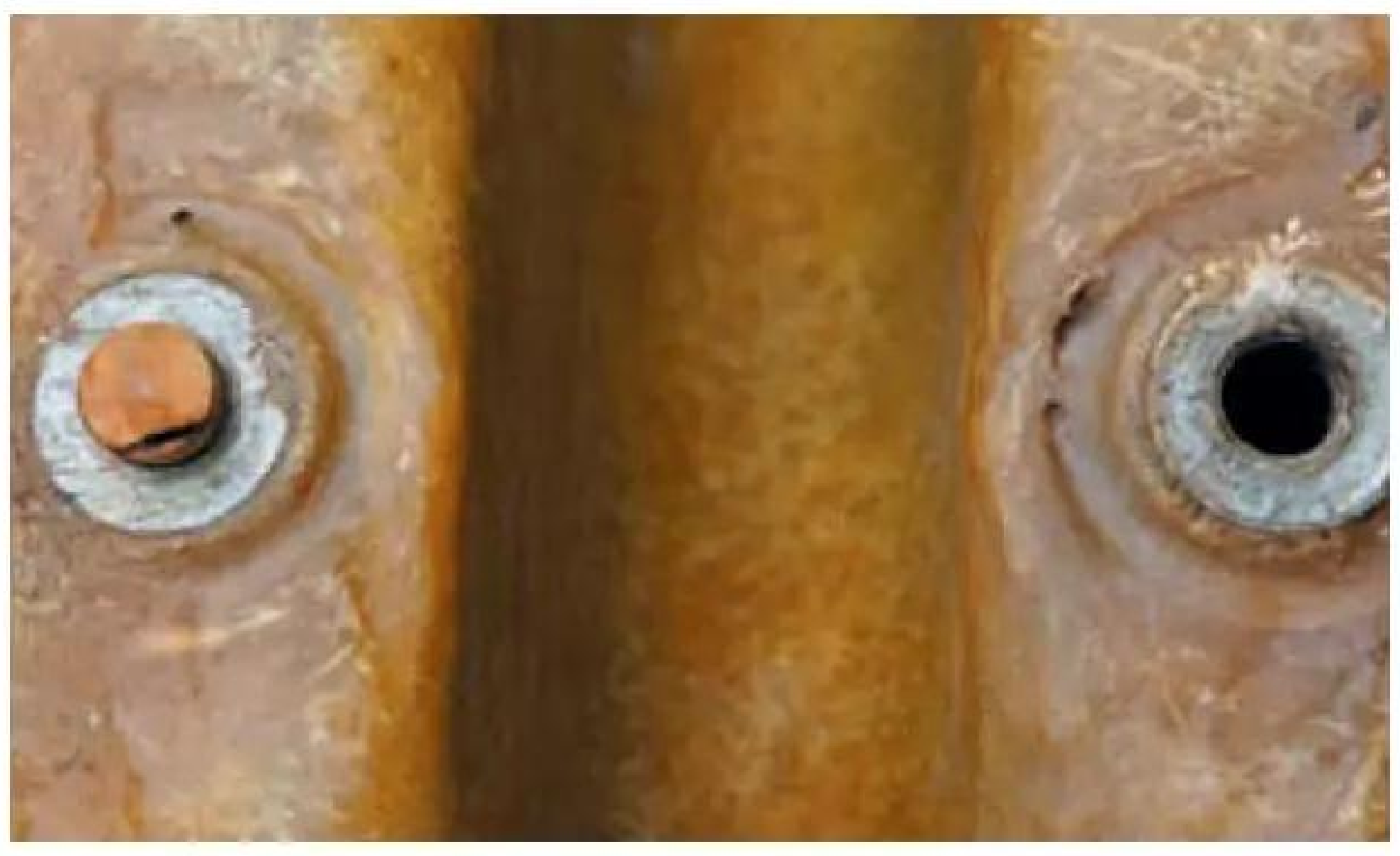
If bike cleaner can shift chain-lube then petrol residues should be a walk in the park. With plenty of hot water to help lift the crud, we're underway.

What comes out is a milky mix of old fuel and small flakes of rubbish.



Using an old brake cable cut and flared out at the end together with a cordless drill, the inside of the tank is carefully scarified. This will readily loosen up any lumps of old fuel and flaking resin.

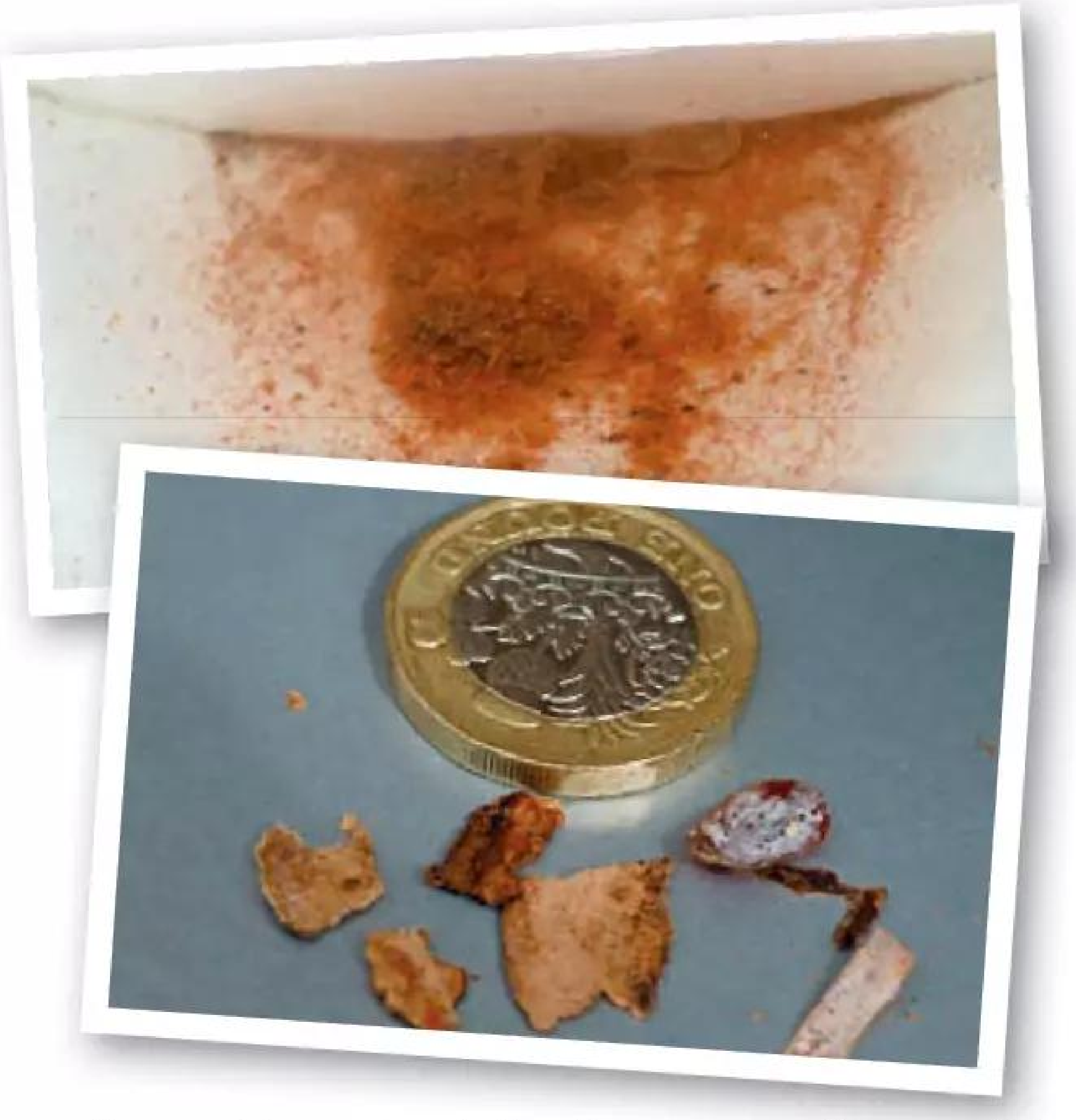


The tap holes have been blanked off with corks or rubber bungs, but we need to be careful with the next stage. These metal inserts are aluminium so there's a need to ensure they're not chemically attacked during the next process.

Don't laugh, I found this tip online. Apparently, Napisan is good at removing not just baby poo! Importantly, it's not aggressive towards metals which means the tap inserts won't be attacked.

Dissolved in hot water, the Napisan gets foaming and cleaning immediately. That head of foam indicates there's reaction going on.

And before our very eyes, flakes of rubbish start to pour out in the almost constant stream of foam.



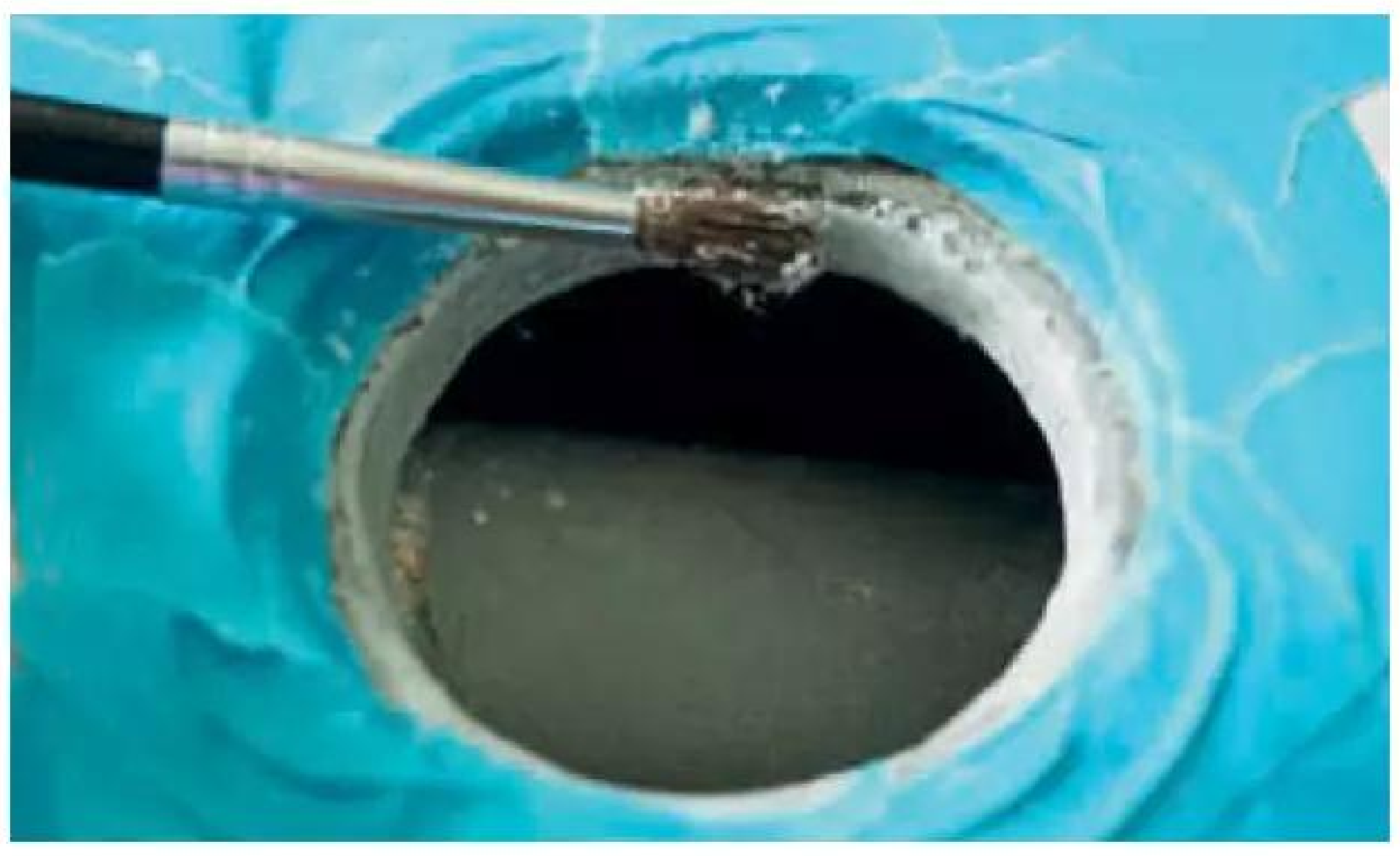
The Bultaco tank had two sessions with the magic nappy cleaner. The rinse water was full of small particles… and look at the big lumps of decayed fuel that came out!

Obvious, but easily overlooked – the tank MUST be dry. The internal resin system has been compromised by ethanol-based petrol thereby becoming porous. The tank spent a week or so on the shelf in my conservatory drying out. Forcing air through with a fan would work, but concentrated heat from a hair dryer or similar can, apparently, cause delamination.

PART A
CASWELL
TANK SEALER
PART B
CASWELL
TANK SEALER

This two-pack liner from Caswell isn't cheap but it's incredibly reliable. Project Suzuki Stinger's tank is still fine with it inside 10 years on.

Tank liners stick like the proverbial so the paintwork needs to be protected accordingly. Multiple layers of newspaper work well with two-pack resin systems.



Any threads on the tank will need protecting to avoid being obscured by stray liner. Molten candle wax applied with an artist's brush works well and is easily removed.

Any excess liner is drained off and the sealer allowed to cure. However, I'd suggest removing the protective wrapping just as the resin goes tacky. If there's anything adhering to the paint it can be removed carefully with some thinners.

Mixed exactly as per the manufacturer's instructions, the liner is poured in and the tank rotated, ensuring every internal surface is covered.

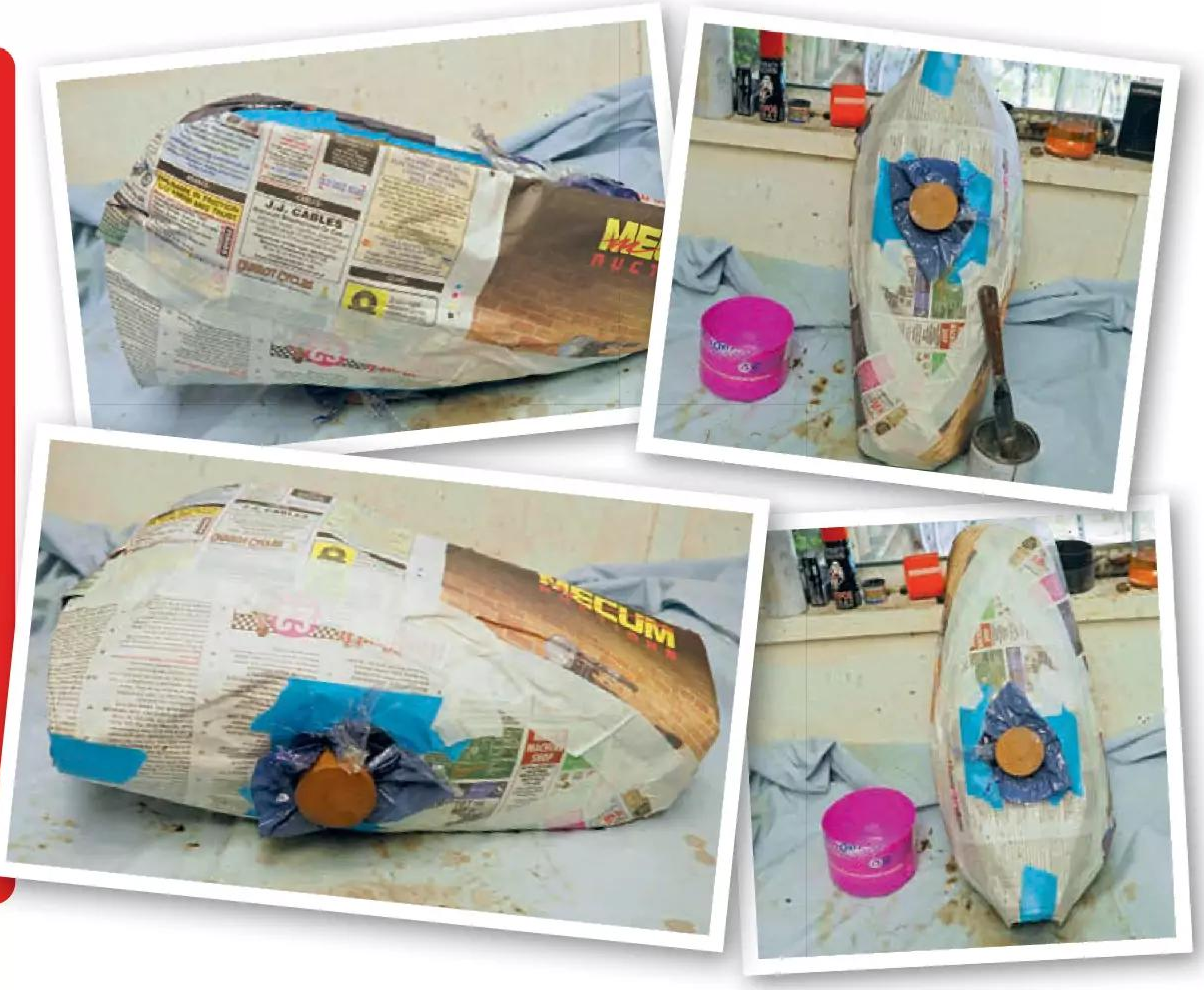
It's vital the tank isn't used for a few days – even when the liner feels hard its integral resin system will still be cross-linking. Always check with the manufacturer's instructions to be absolutely sure.

And on the subject of liners, when it comes to fibre-glass tanks make sure your selected product is actually suitable. Some single pack tank liner chemistries simply cannot bond the polyester resin of the tank. Finally, if anyone has found a viable liner for the polyethylene fuel tanks that are fitted to motocross bikes, please write in and tell us what you use. **cmm**

## Full Coverage

It might sound obvious but when lining a tank, you need to ensure that all internal faces are totally and comprehensively covered in the liner.

After incomplete mixing, partial application of the liner is the main reason for failure. Think of the tank as having six sides like a cardboard box and appreciate that each one needs to be treated equally and fully coated. Carefully turning the tank over on to each successive side gets the resin flowing across all surfaces. Allowing the resin to collect across the tank's base gets the liquid mass in one place and by then inverting the tank the liner can be spread across the inner roof by careful manipulation. The tank can be drained by either the tap hole(s) and/or the filler cap – whichever works best.



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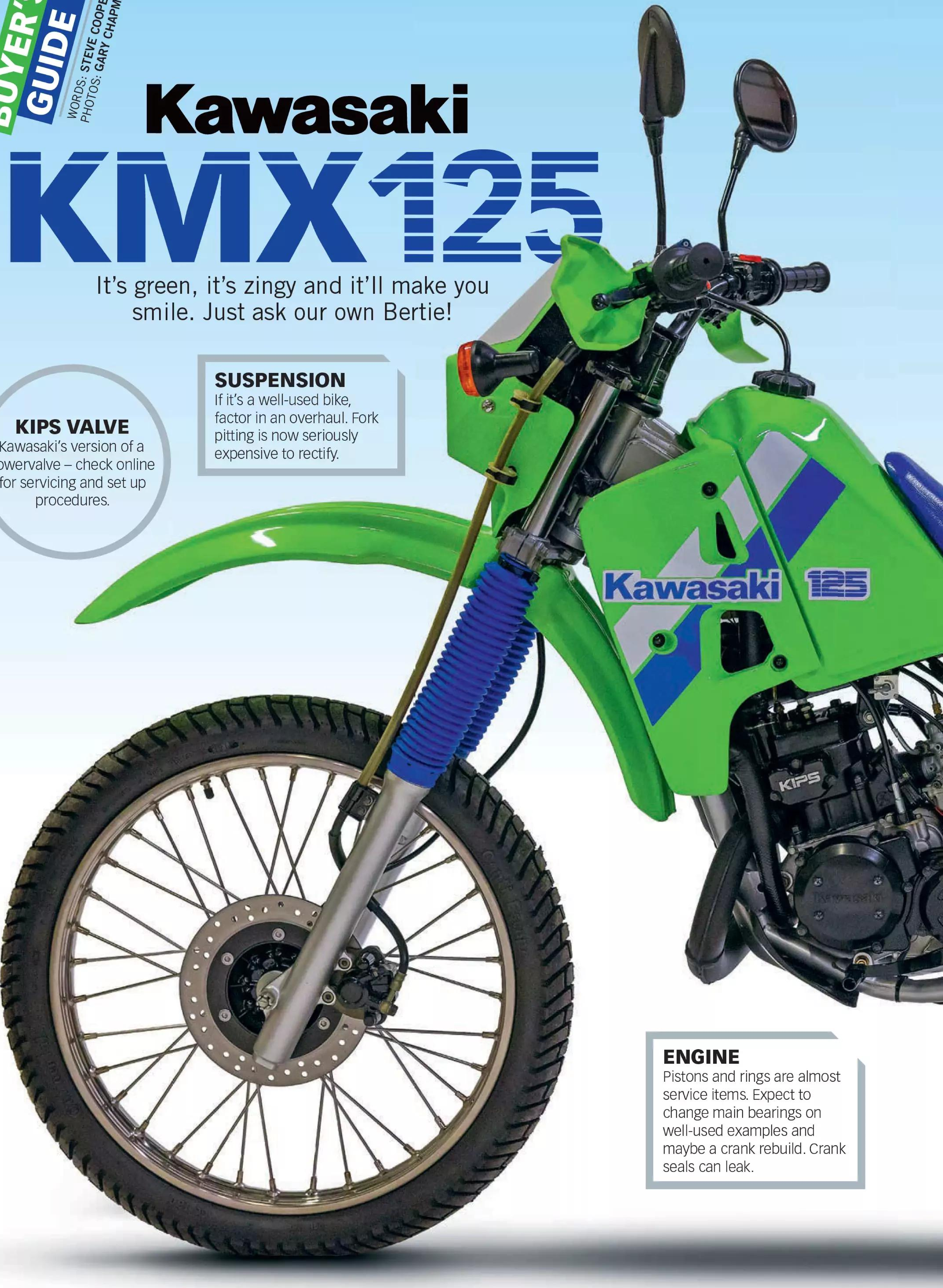
BUYER'S GUIDE

WORDS: STEVE COOPER
PHOTOS: GARY CHAPMAN

# Kawasaki KMX125

It's green, it's zingy and it'll make you smile. Just ask our own Bertie!



**KIPS VALVE**
Kawasaki's version of a powervalve – check online for servicing and set up procedures.

**SUSPENSION**
If it's a well-used bike, factor in an overhaul. Fork pitting is now seriously expensive to rectify.

**ENGINE**
Pistons and rings are almost service items. Expect to change main bearings on well-used examples and maybe a crank rebuild. Crank seals can leak.

**By 1987 when this month's subject matter was first registered for the road a lot of teenage angst had dissipated; 17-year-olds were no longer frothing like a pack of Mentos dropped into a giant bottle of cola.**

The 1983 125cc learner law was now a four-year-old, immutable, fact and the kids had pretty much bought into the notion that 250s were both things of the past and out of reach.

Thankfully, Japan had rather neatly furnished the UK market with buzzing tiddlers nominally adapted to meet its laws and the spotty oiks were spoilt for choice. Better still, you could have learner bikes that looked and behaved like dirt machines. Yes, okay, the 250 TS/DT/XL/KL trailies that had existed previously were generally alright, but nowhere near as potent or pokey as the GT/RD/CB/KH road machines. The 125cc leaner law had

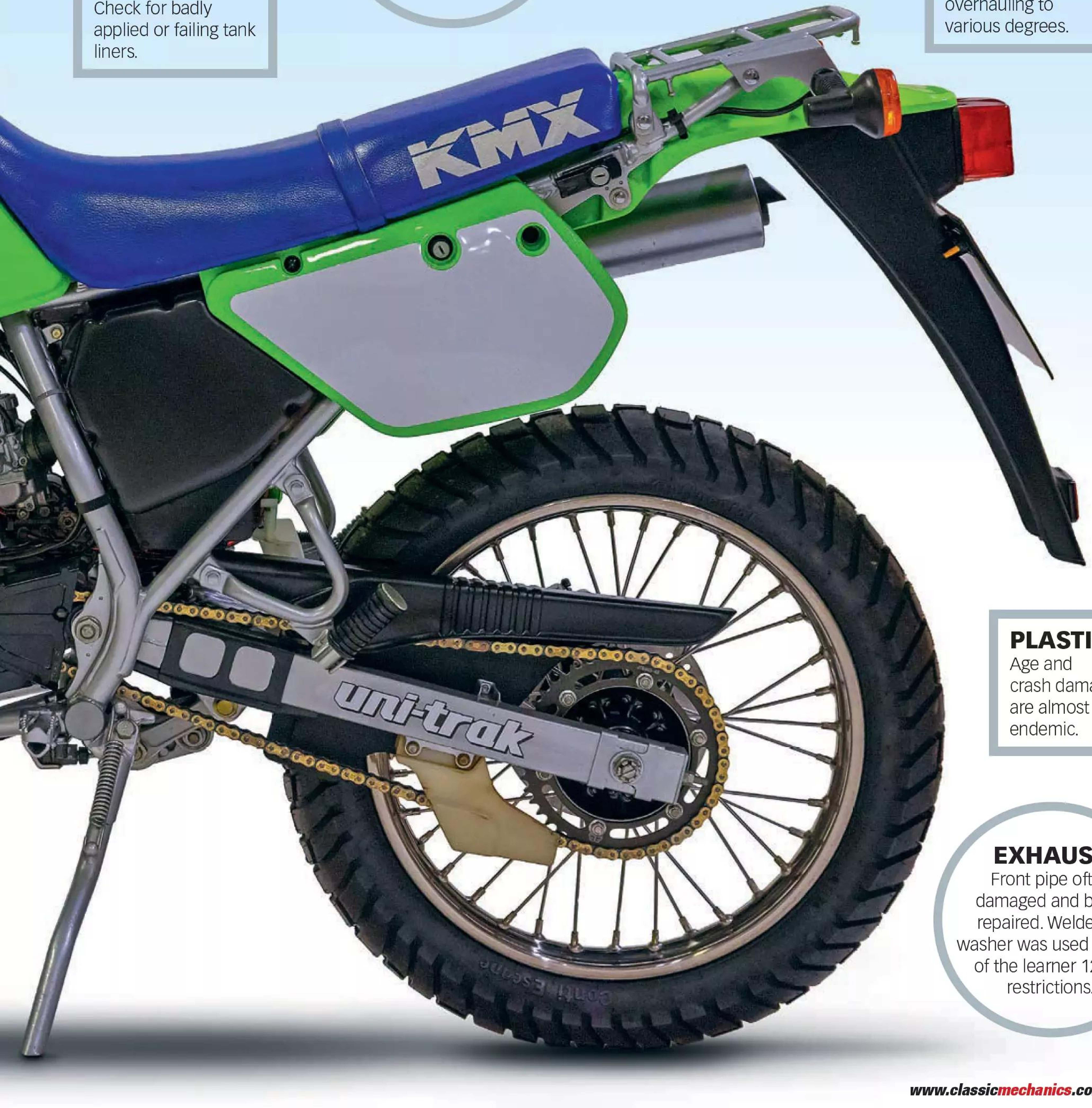
### CRASH DAMAGE
There aren't many that haven't been dropped so look closely for obvious issues and bad repairs.

### TANK
Prone to rusting and never exactly sturdy when new. Bubbling paint and/or fuel stains strongly suggest serious problems ahead. Check for badly applied or failing tank liners.

### ELECTRICS
Basic systems are now showing their age. Side-stand switch can cause issues.

### COOLING SYSTEM
Motors run on tap water may have leak and/or corrosion issues.

### RUNNING GEAR
Unless you're looking at a box-fresh example expect bearings, linkages, suspension, brakes, etc. to need overhauling to various degrees.



### PLASTICS
Age and crash damage are almost endemic.

### EXHAUST
Front pipe often damaged and badly repaired. Welded-in washer was used as part of the learner 12bhp restrictions.

unquestionably levelled the playing field with manufacturers putting what was effectively the same engine in both trail and road bike – suddenly you could have your cake and eat it.

Kawasaki's KMX125 was a prototypical example of the eighth-litre learner trail/off-road/faux scrambler bikes of the period. Acres of plastic aping the-then current moto-crossers, bright graphics, flexibly mounted indicators, hand-guards, headlamp nacelle, number boards and much more. The little KMX really did look the business and fitted in perfectly with its rivals – the likes of Yamaha's DT125LC, Honda's MTX125, Suzuki's TS125X – and all of them liquid-cooled.

Upping the ante over what had come before was the adoption and fitment of a powervalve. Originally pioneered by Yamaha on works competition machinery, the basic concept was to vary the height of the exhaust port thereby facilitating both power and tractability. The KMX's KIPS (Kawasaki Integrated Power Valve System) went a step further. It altered the exhaust port's height, closed off a secondary port duct, and employed a resonance chamber giving low rpm torque and maximum power… but not to its full potential on the UK versions with their 12bhp limit.

However, it didn't take too long before the speed-obsessed teenagers found out how to liberate the motor's full latent potential to deliver some 22–24bhp. With a revised exhaust system, upgraded reed block, larger carburettor and profiled cylinder head, rear wheel figures were said to be approaching some 29bhp.

Against its peers how did the KMX rate? Yamaha's DT125LC was said to be slightly faster and had the handling edge, but the Kawasaki was reputed to be better built and thus more rugged. Owners of Suzuki's TS125X reckoned their bikes were the business on the dirt and Honda MTX125 fans were generally smug with their Big Aitch mud-plugger… even if it had cost them substantially more. Ultimately, there really wasn't a lot between any of them and brand loyalty, availability and location of your nearest dealer often dictated what you bought.

Four decades on, any learner legal 125 stroker that's still running and there or thereabouts is serious cause for celebration. With so many ridden into the ground – and often beyond – they've all led hard, frantic lives at the hands of merciless kids.

You'll hear KMX and KDX125s often mentioned in the same sentence and often mixed up. The KMX of this feature is the learner friendly, comfortable version of the pair. The KDX is best viewed as a road-legal, slightly sanitised version of KX125 moto crosser and essentially an enduro tool and a lot more dirt-focussed.

Why might you consider buying a Kawasaki KMX125 now? In standard, restricted format, it's a doddle to ride and if you fancy some green laning its light weight and manoeuvrability will impress. The spares situation for the motor and service items seems to be pretty good as well. In tuned format a KMX125 is something of a missile (in relative terms) and providing its fed decent oil and looked after will always put smiles on dials.

The apparent high seat height melts away with some weight in the seat, making it very accessible for those of smaller stature and older riders who no longer want all the mass and heft of a bigger bike. Significantly they're not especially expensive at present either. Slim enough to slip into that vacant space in your garage or shed, Kawasaki's little KMX minx might just be the trail bike you never knew you needed in your life. cmm

## What to buy and how much to pay

**We probably shouldn't have to keep saying this but as it's a trail bike… buy the most complete and unmolested example you can possibly find.**

**The crash-sensitive parts and plastics will always be the most difficult source, followed by the tanks and instruments. Unless you actually have a cache of parts on hand ready, a field hack will forever remain a money pit.**

**Always best check the bike looks straight as many a 1980s trailie has been repeatedly binned by have-a-go heroes. Prices are still reasonable at the time of writing. A 2002 example on 21,000 miles running with MoT was being offered for just £870, with both late 1980s and an early 1990s example being offered just shy of £1900. A recent auction sale saw a very tidy example go for just £1500 plus fees. Of course, if you're supremely fortunate you might even find a KMX125 with KMX200 motor – now that would be fun!**

Useful rear-rack good for bungee-ing your lunch-box on, back in the day…

## RESOURCES

- facebook.com/groups/135010969883288
- facebook.com/groups/277590517170483
- 125ccsportsbikes.com
- kawiforums.com

## PARTS AND SERVICES

- CMSNL
- Loius-Moto
- PJME
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## Steve Ballantyne

**This KMX125 came from North Wales as a wreck, but I wanted to get it back to how mine looked in 1986.**

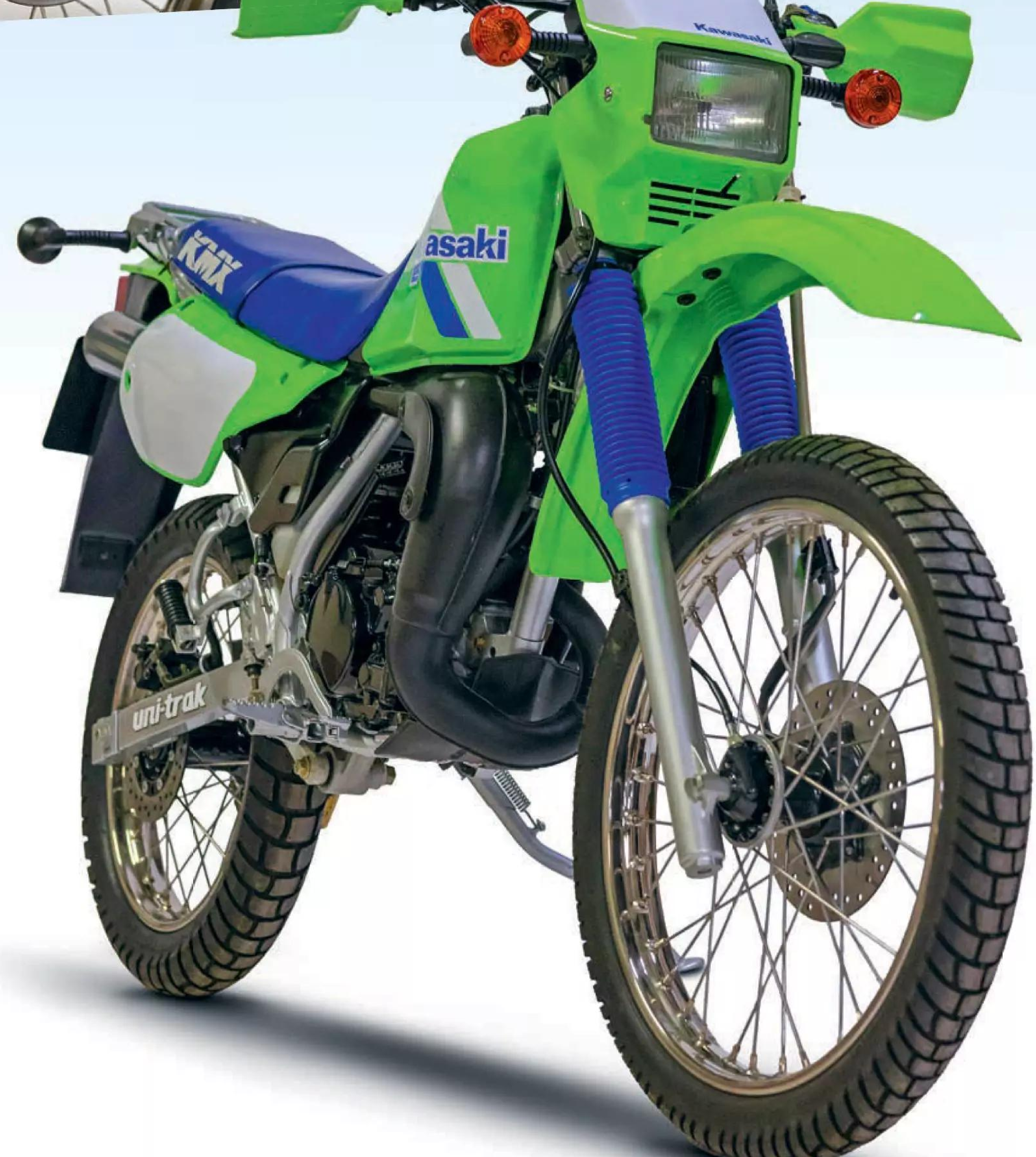
**I do my own vapour blasting so that made the restoration a little easier. Most of the plastics were replaced with genuine parts and I tried to use NOS wherever possible.**

**The wheel rims are new and I used stainless steel spokes when they were rebuilt on to refreshed hubs. All of the zinc-plated fasteners and fittings I did myself.**

**The frame was powder-coated by Fastline of Preston and I'm very pleased with the results. The motor received a full engine rebuild and the barrel was fitted with a new liner bored to suit the piston and rings available at the time.**

**Aiming to keep as much of the work in-house as possible, I recovered the seat and, because you can't get them, I came up with a way of recreating the KMX lettering on the seat. I'm really pleased with the end result and it's staying in my collection of period nostalgia.**

Kawasaki
125



## SPECIFICATION

### Kawasaki KMX125

**ENGINE TYPE**
124cc two-stroke single, liquid-cooled, reed-valve induction

**BORE AND STROKE**
54.0 x 54.4mm

**CLAIMED HORSEPOWER**
22bhp @ 9500rpm (12bhp restricted)

**MAXIMUM TORQUE**
12.2ft-lb @ 9000rpm (restricted N/A))

**TRANSMISSION TYPE**
6-speed, chain final drive

**COMPRESSION RATIO**
7.8:1

**CARBURATION**
Mikuni VM26SS

**TYRES**
2.75 x 21″ (F), 4.10 x 18″ (R)

**FUEL CAPACITY**
2 gallons (9.3 litres)

**WET WEIGHT**
96kg (212lb)

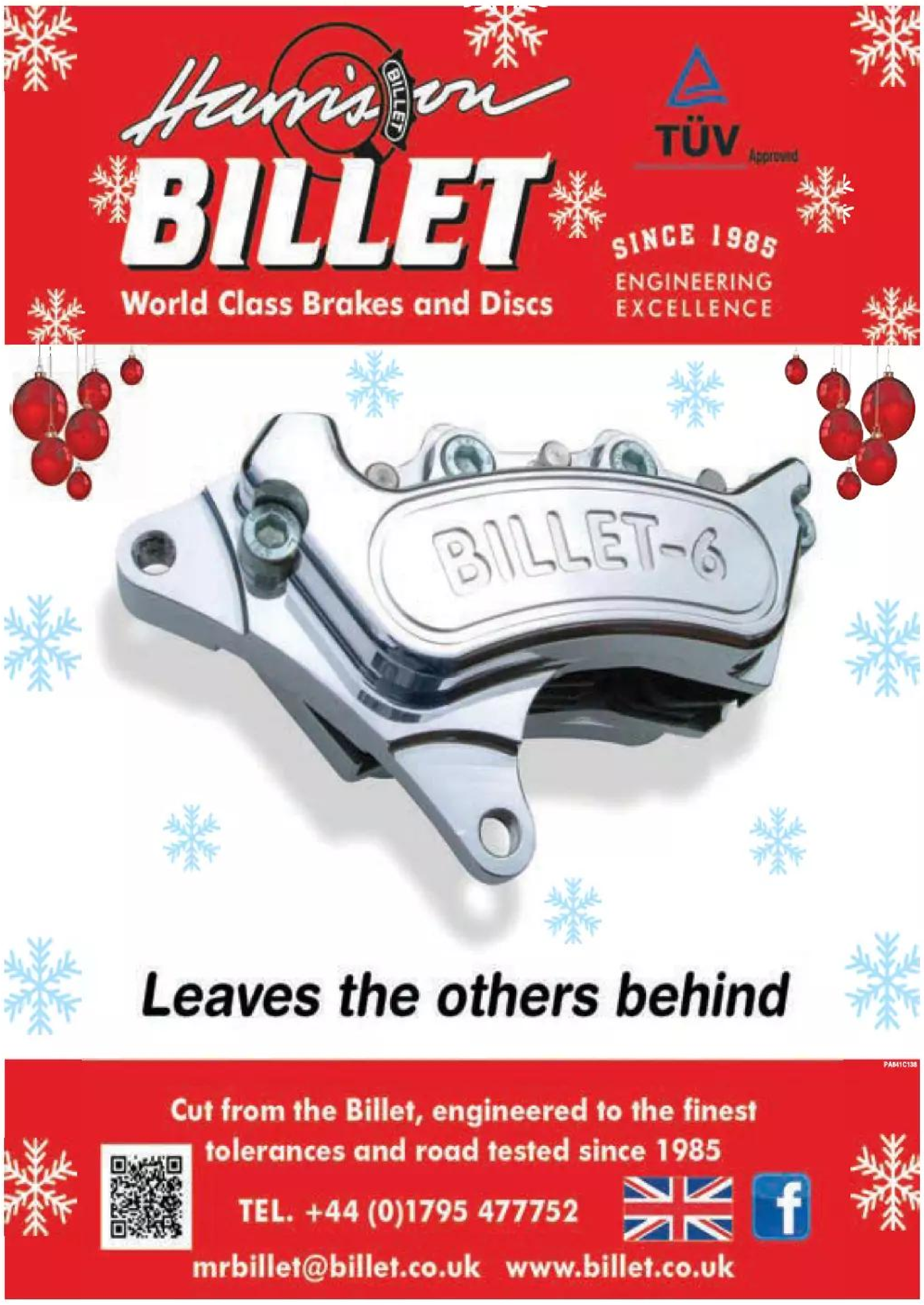
**WHEELBASE**
1375mm (54.1″)

**OVERALL WIDTH**
855mm (33.6″)

**OVERALL LENGTH**
2100mm (82.7″)

**SEAT HEIGHT**
865mm (34.1″)

**The little KMX might just be the trail bike you never knew you needed in your life.**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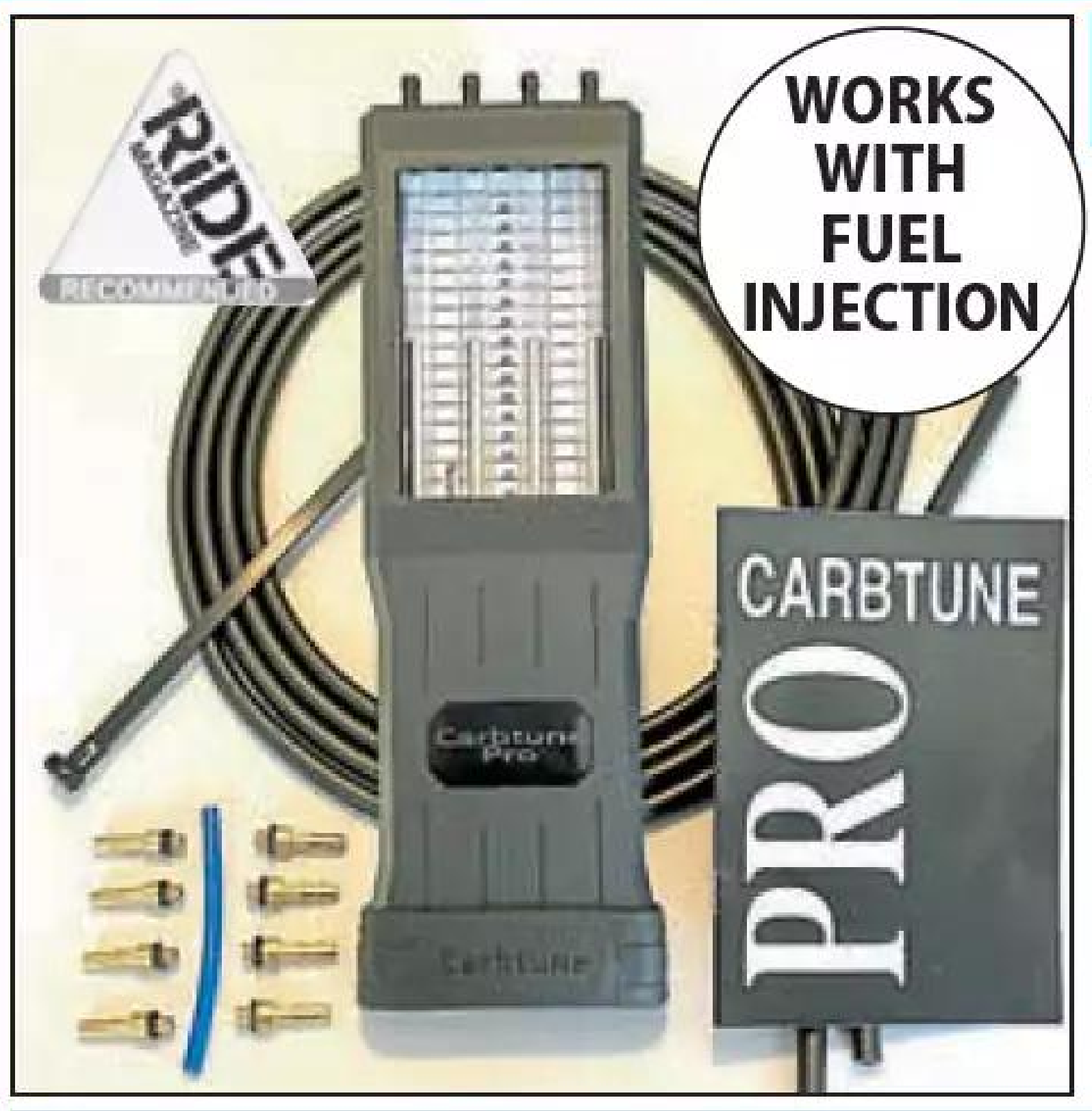

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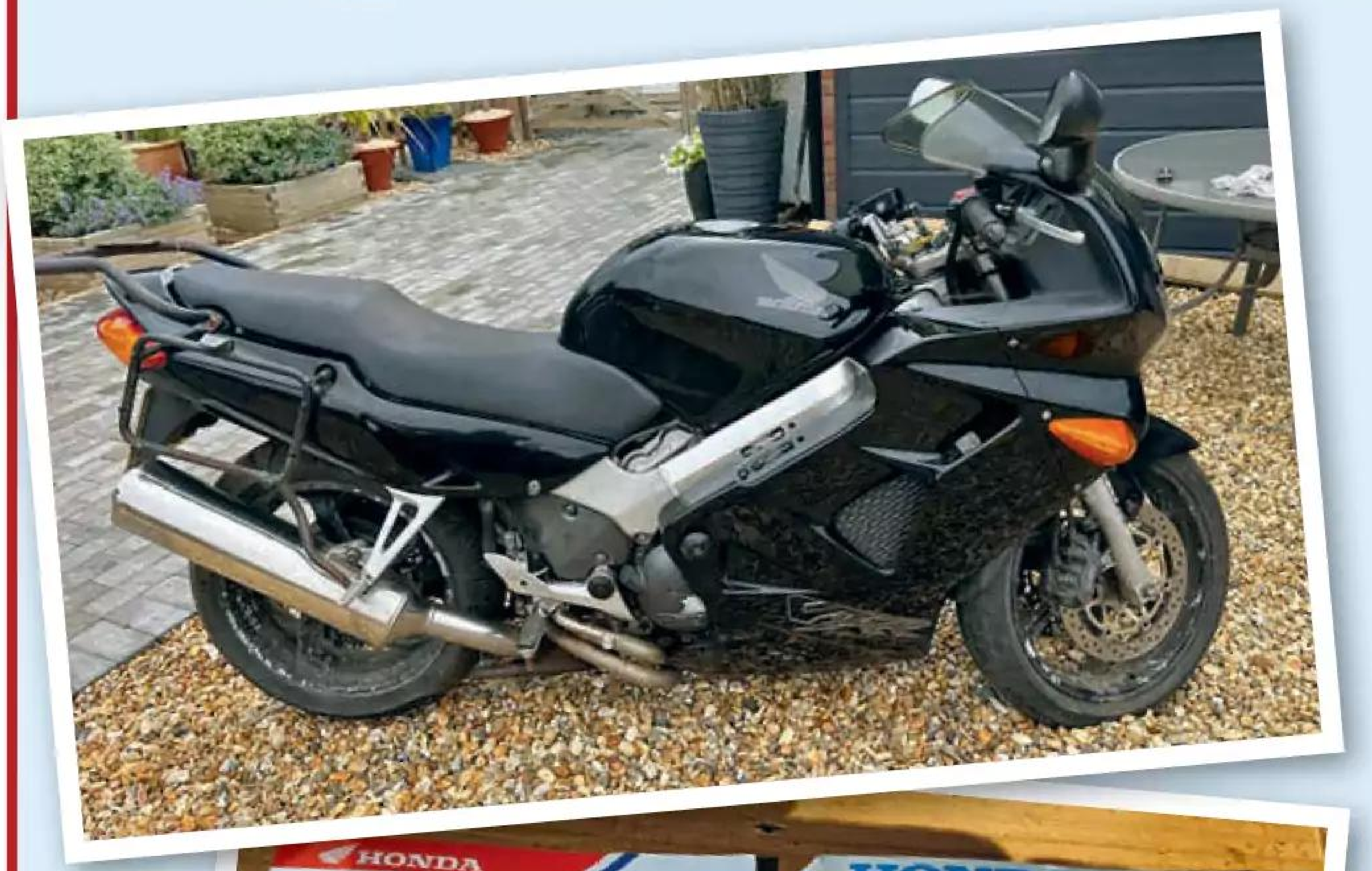
WORDS: **KEV RAYMOND**

# Bay-watch*

## *and FB Marketplace, and Gumtree, and anywhere else we spot something we like…

Kev Raymond keeps his eye on the choppy waters of the classic world to see if any projects, donors and bargains are out there worthy of being dragged out of the surf for some mouth-to-mouth…



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## 1998 Honda VFR800

**Asking: £295**

One of those ads that had me reaching for the phone (or at least, sending a Marketplace message) the minute I saw it. I've always loved the pre-VTEC VFR800s, and although this has obviously been neglected for some time (according to DVLA it's been off the road since 2013), these things are so well put together that it should clean up well.

And at that price, even if it turned out to be scrap, the original exhaust and bodywork would pay back the asking price. I was already idly wondering where I could get a pair of panniers to fit those racks when the message came back: sorry, already sold. Bugger. Still, my loss, someone else's gain, and coincidentally in this case the buyer turns out to be an old friend of mine! I've just had an email from him: 'Just picked it up. It starts and runs, but the clutch is seized. Bodywork is pretty good but most alloy bits pretty furry. Need to apply for V5 but have original service book/handbook and keys so all seems kosher.'

Purists look away, but it's not going to remain standard for long. 'I've had the idea of Hawk/Bros looks with VFR power knocking about in my head for a few years now, so once I've made sure it's sound I'll be on the lookout for Bros seat/bodywork/sub-frame, etc. Looking forward to getting going with it!' And I'm looking forward to seeing how it turns out…

# 1980s Saxon rolling chassis

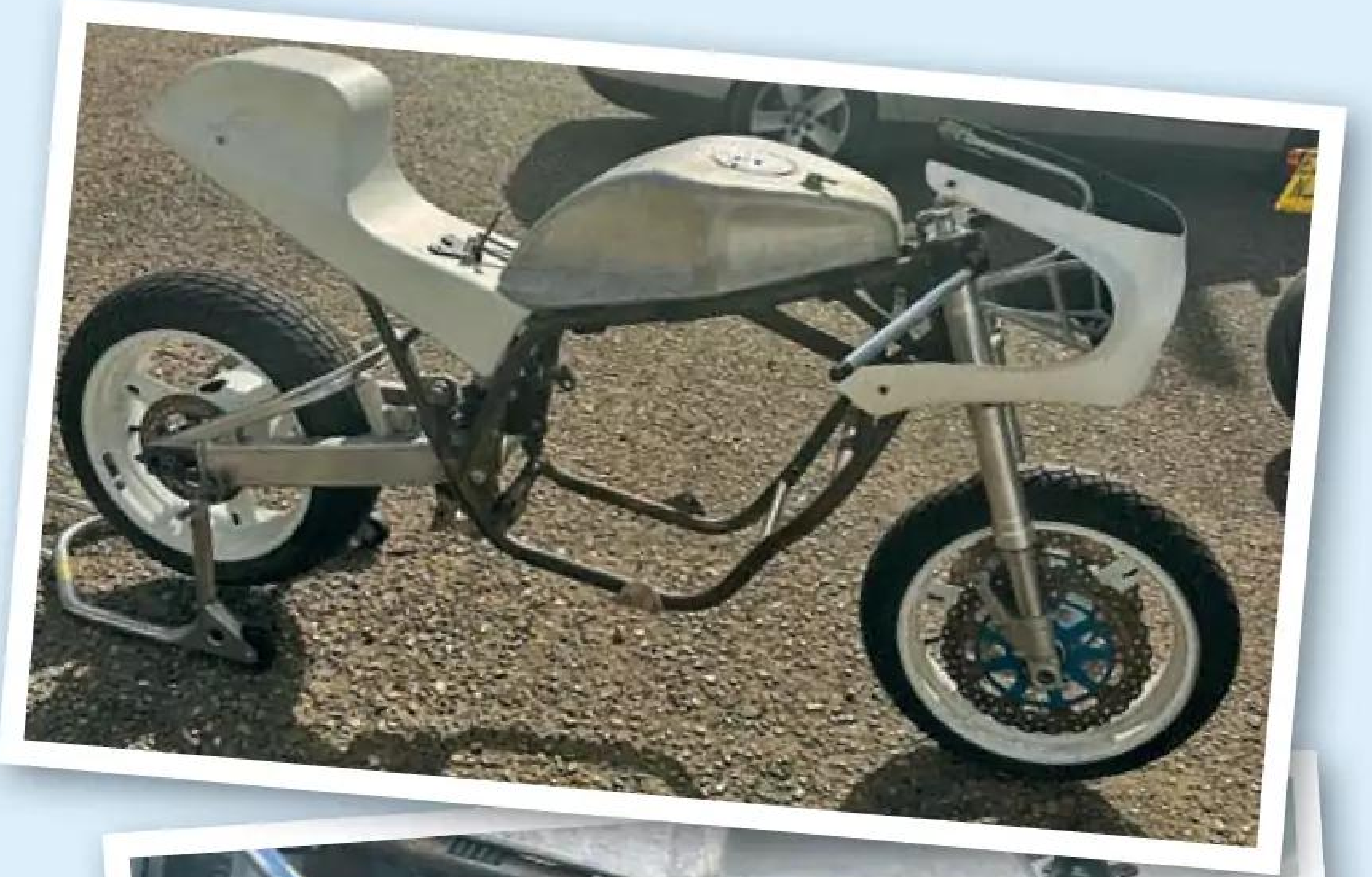
Asking: £4750

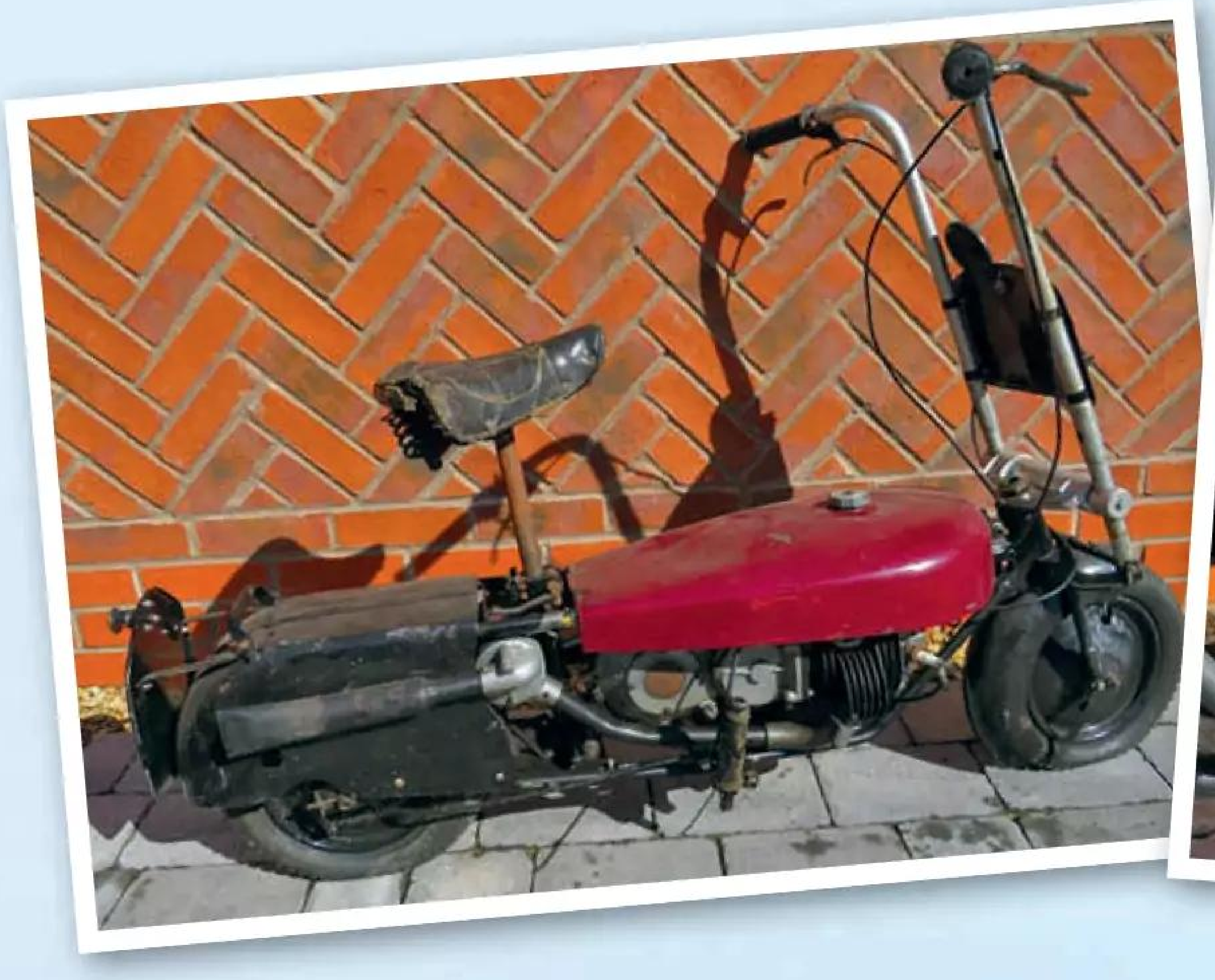
There's always something interesting up for sale on the Grumpy1260 Facebook page, especially for lovers of old Suzukis, but every now and then you get a proper gem like this.

It's advertised as a Saxon, and I'm pretty sure in this case that means Saxon Racing, the now-defunct firm who were better known for frames featuring boss Nigel Hill's innovative SaxTrac front-end (BMW nicked the idea to build their original Telelever system in 1993). I had a small doubt though – could it actually be from Saxon Engineering in Stoke? They've also built some tasty frames over the years. One way to find out – ask them!

Stewart gets straight back to me when I message him. "I've been asked about this one on a number of occasions, but no, it's not one of mine! Definitely a Nigel Hill creation. An interesting bike though, and I'm sure having been built by Nigel it will be an absolute pleasure to ride. He was a great engineer and builder, very talented – one of the guys that inspired me to build my own frames, along with Richard Peckett and the Harris brothers."

Praise indeed. The basic chassis and hand-beaten aluminium tank and seat unit are a great start for a throwback special, and the GSX-R front-end and Spondon swinger set it off nicely (the wavy discs would have to go). The frame would originally have been built to take a big GS or GSX engine, but I think I'd be inclined to go for an air/oil-cooled GSX-R lump, or early Bandit 12, with the biggest big bore that'd fit, and low gearing for monster wheelies. What's that? A turbo? Don't be silly. Although now you come to mention it...





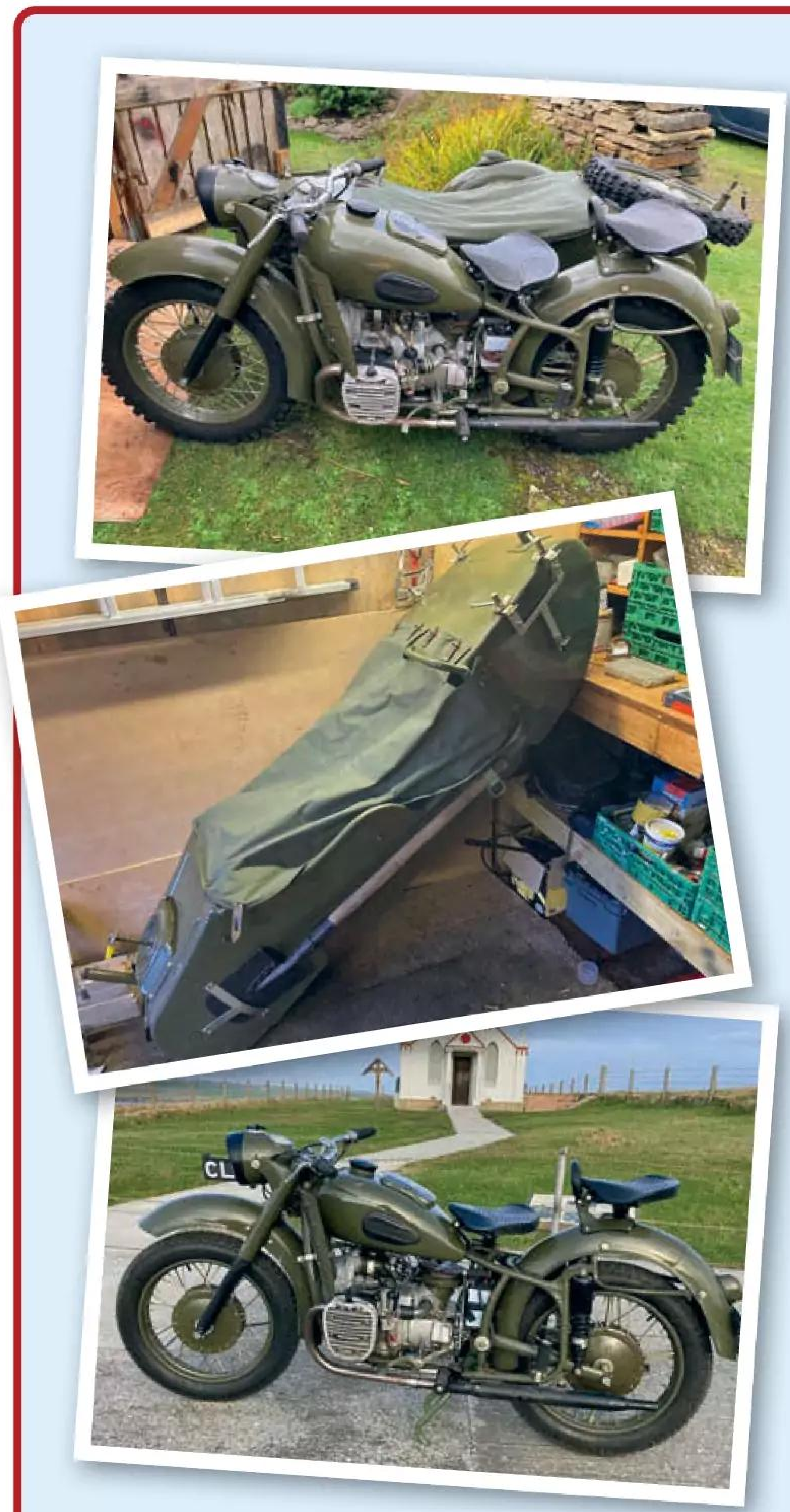
# 1948 Brockhouse Excelsior Corgi Mk.1

Asking: £1100

Small bikes are ace, and when a bike's so small it's not even as big as its own name, you know you're on to a winner.

The Corgi was a civilian version of the wartime Welbike, which was designed to fold up small and be parachuted into action along with troops who could then scoot off from the drop zone. In practice it wasn't used much (or much use, to be honest) in that front-line role, but they were popular as general transport on bases and in occupied areas.

After the war, the bike's inventor set up a company to make civilian versions, eventually building nearly 30,000 of them between 1948 and 1954. The main difference between the military and civvy version is the latter has a conventional fuel tank rather than the tiny, pressurised tank on the original. Different engine, too – both 98cc and single gear, but the Welbike had a Villiers motor, the Corgi an Excelsior Spryt. This must be one of the first post-war versions, so it's push-start only (later models had a kick-start). It wants an overhaul and some new tyres, and ideally a fresh coat of paint and decals, but it'd be the perfect thing to turn up to a summer evening bike meet and upstage all the 'proper' classics.



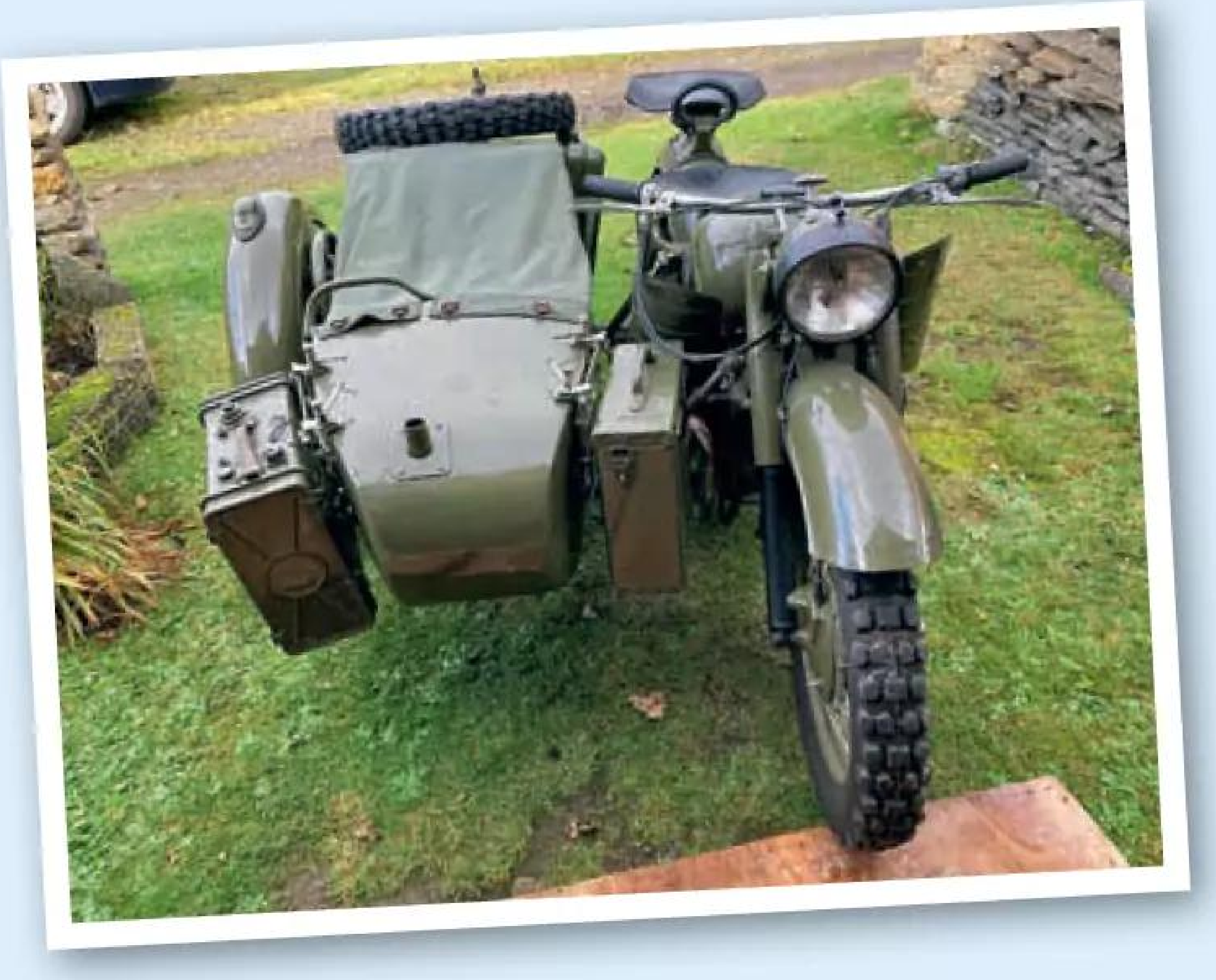
## 1972 Dnepr 750

**Asking: £2750**

Always liked these, despite having shares in one when I was a kid – we never did get it running on both cylinders and my shins still ache thinking about the vicious recoil on the kick-start…

Mostly sold in the UK under the Cossack brand, alongside other Soviet-era versions based on BMW's pre-war M71, Dneprs were built in Ukraine from 1946 until well into the 1990s. According to the ad, this is an MT9 750, which is odd since as far as I know the MT9 was only ever a 650, but it wouldn't be a surprise if the engine had been changed or modified sometime in the past 50 years.

There were so few real technical differences between different years and models that a lot of parts are interchangeable. When I saw it I thought it was the MW version, which was originally produced only for the Red Army – it's certainly been painted up to look that way. It also comes with the military equipment from the MW, including the sidecar-mounted shovel, ammo box, fuel can and machine gun mount. It even has an original field radio!



Shame it's not got the MW's two-wheel drive system as well, but then if it did, there'd have been no way to convert it to British-standard left-hand chair, which has been done since the photos for the ad were taken although the chair hasn't been refitted yet.

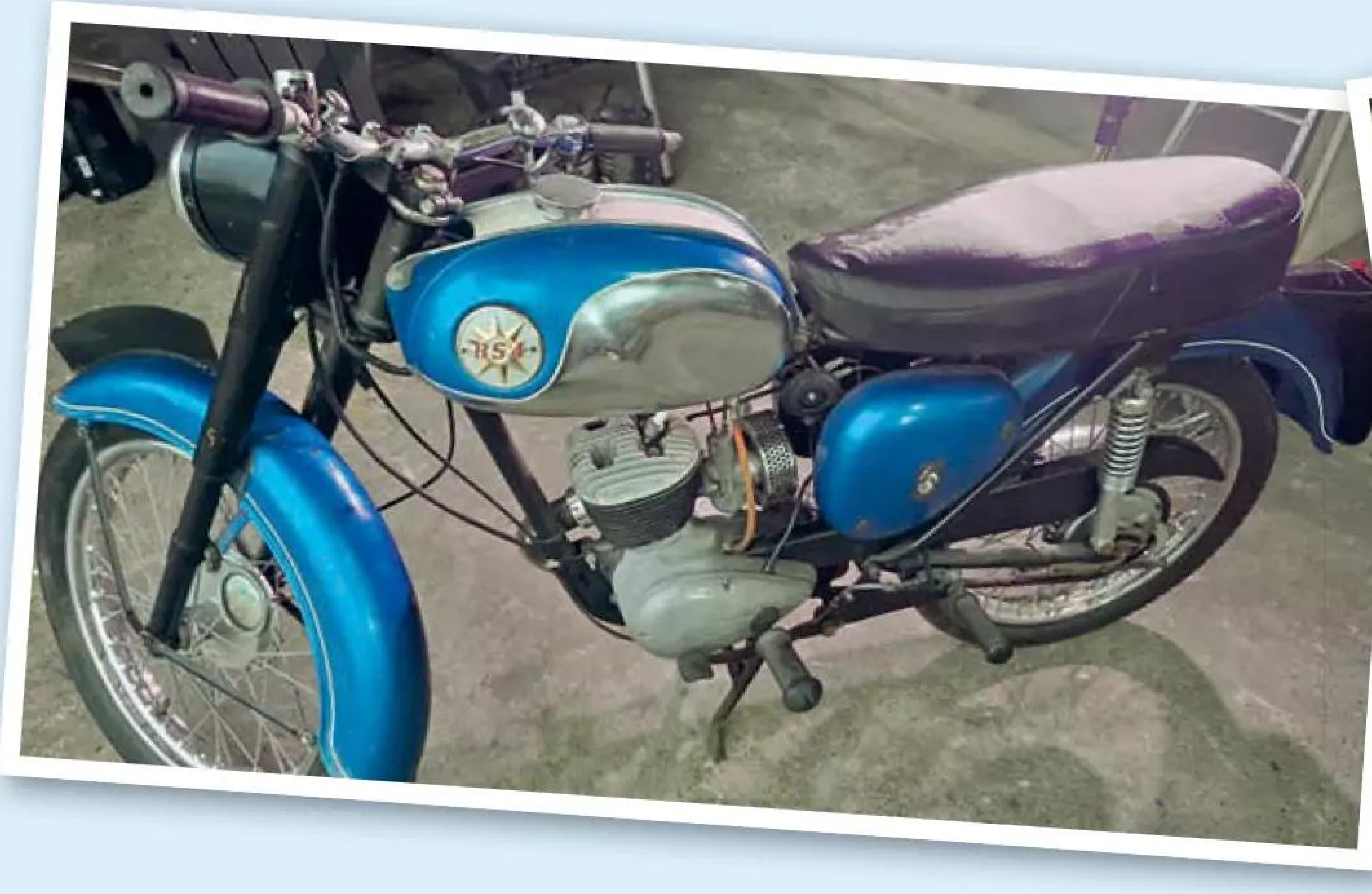
The seller says the gearbox has gone pop – he's got a recon unit to go in but health issues mean he's giving up the project. I reckon the asking price is pretty fair given the overall condition, and it shouldn't take too much to get it back on the road and turning heads. Onward comrades!

## 1968 BSA Bantam D14/4

**Asking: £1000**

When I was a kid in the 70s, we used to go and visit my great aunt and uncle in Cornwall most summers, at their rambling old farmhouse on Bodmin Moor.

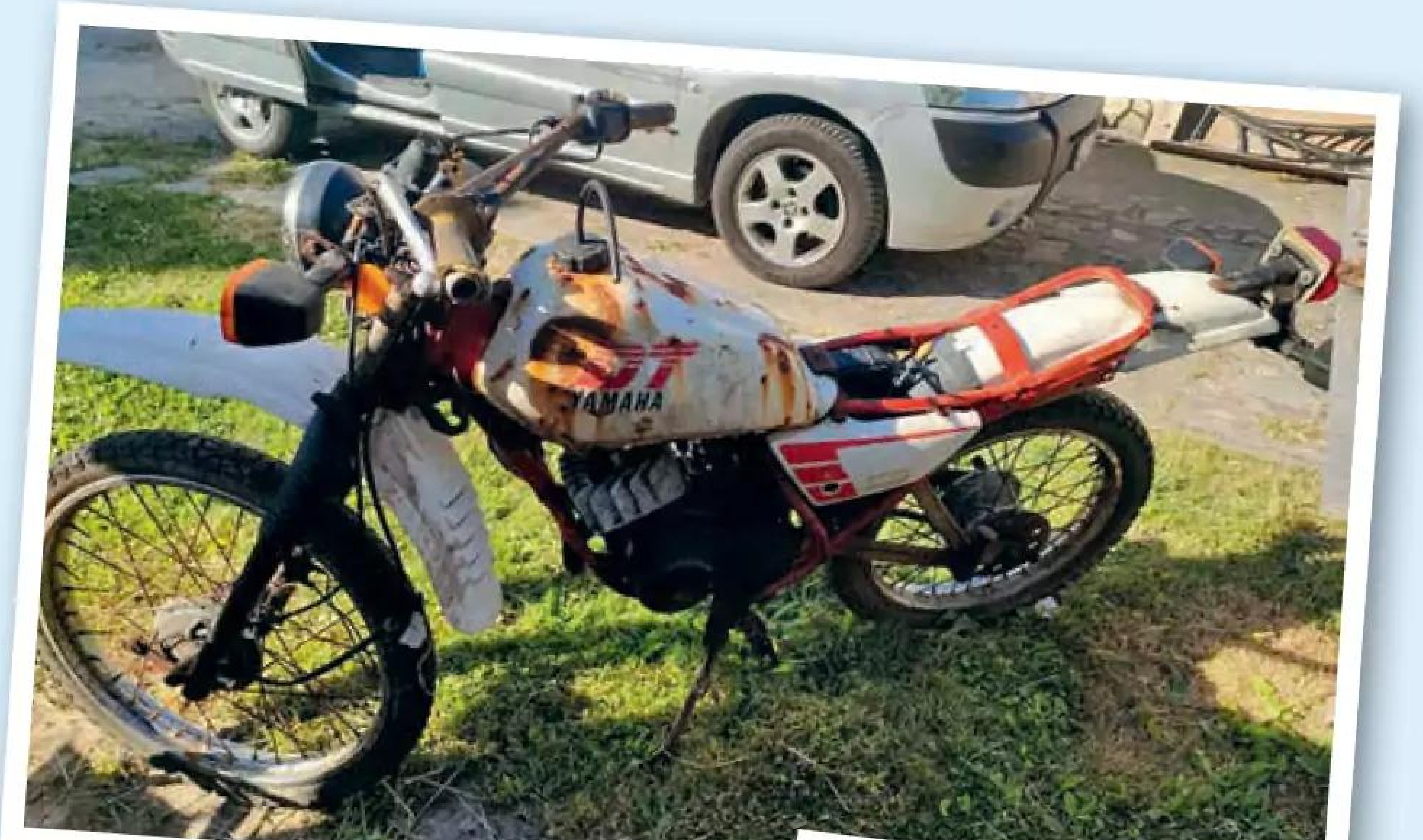
Lurking in one of my uncle's barns were a couple of old BSA Bantams, which fascinated me. I'd spend hours in there jumping up and down on the kick-starts, convinced that if only I could get the engines spinning over fast enough they'd magically burst into life and I could ride off across the fields before anyone could stop me. My uncle did nothing to dissuade me from this fantasy. It was only years later I realised there was no hope they'd go, given that they had no fuel in and no keys to turn the ignition on. My uncle later admitted that if I was in the barn kicking over dead engines, then he knew I wasn't elsewhere causing havoc. Wise man. This would be a perfect way to relive those memories – it's lacking a spark apparently, so I could kick away at it to my heart's content…

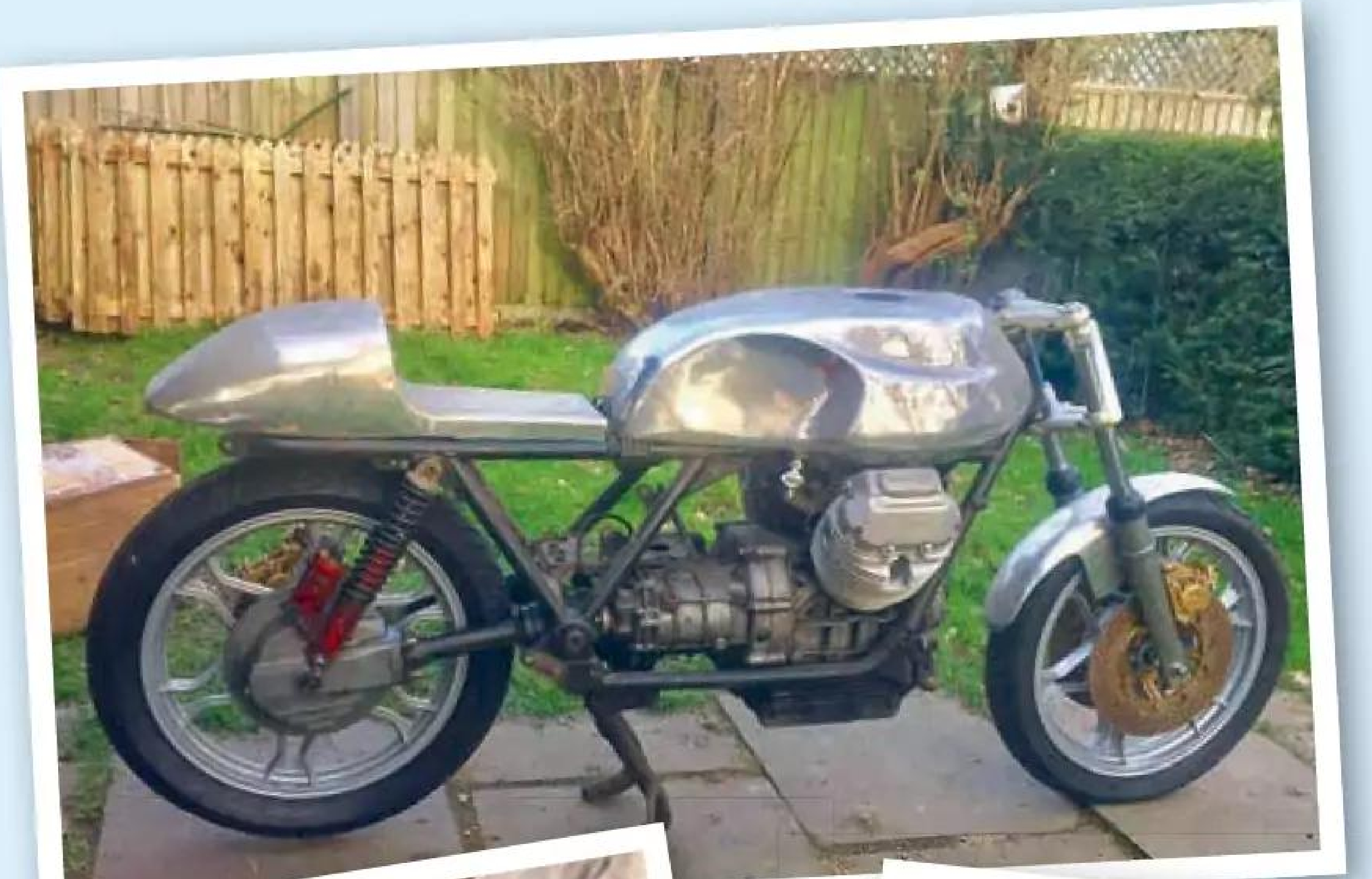


# 1987 Yamaha DT50

Asking: £220

Another DT, also from Leboncoin in France, also cheap, and also sans papers. Another bargain then? Not really: a look at the photos shows this has no gear lever or foot brake pedal. This is a French market model, and that means back then in France it only counted as a moped (so you could ride one legally at 14) if it didn't have gears. Yes, this is a twist-and-go version, and so it's never going to be worth much in the UK. It's listed as a 1975 bike but it's not – French market models had pedal drive until about 1982. I think it's actually much later – probably about 1987 going by the side-panel logos. It is cheap though, and apart from the missing seat it seems all complete, including the sought-after original exhaust.





# 1979 Moto Guzzi T3/Le Mans special

Asking: £4000

What a lovely thing to have in a shed, even if it's only to look at. This started life as a T3 – Guzzi's 1970s sports tourer. This one's been heavily modified with bits from the sportier Le Mans though – easy to do as the Le Mans was based on the T3 in the first place.

So, it has Le Mans running gear, and a Le Mans top-end (higher compression, bigger valves, walloping great 36mm Del'Orto 'pumper' carbs) but instead of the Le Mans' angular styling it has a lovely, swoopy aluminium tank, seat unit and front mudguard. Price seems a bit steep at first glance but the tank and seat would be a fair chunk of that, plus it also comes with a load of other new and tasty bits (including a new full exhaust system, Tarozzi rear-sets and rebuilt carbs) which aren't pictured, as well as most of the other small parts needed to finish it. It's going to be gorgeous. If you buy it, please let us know...

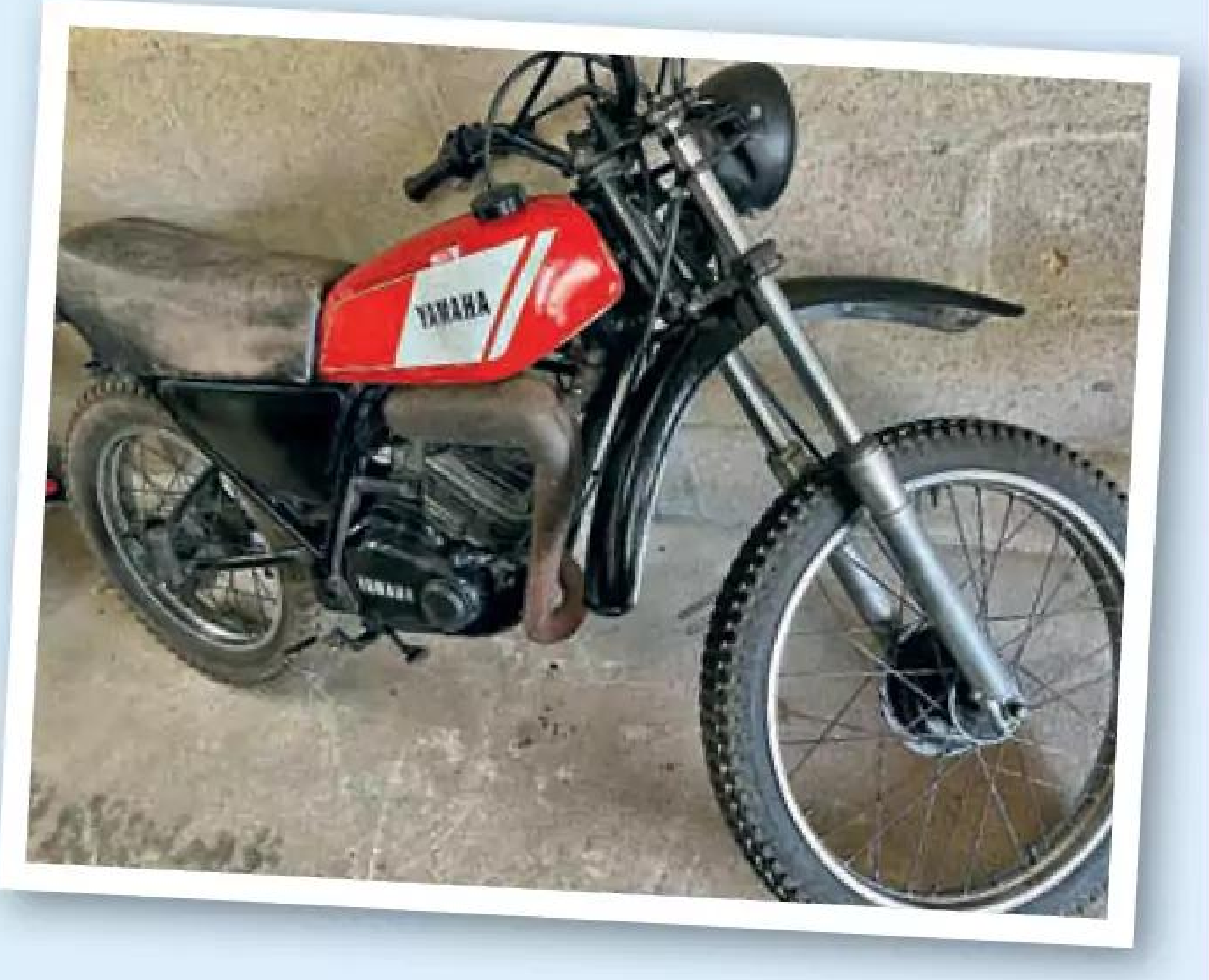
# 1970 Yamaha DT125

Asking: £400

This popped up on the Leboncoin site in France recently and caught my eye because I love DT-MXs, and because of the price.

It's currently a non-runner but I doubt that would be any great problem. It's cheap because it doesn't have papers, and without papers there's simply no way to get it back into the French registration system, which is absurdly rigid. So, it's advertised as for use on private land only.

However, if anyone were to buy it and take it back to Blighty, then it could be registered without too much trouble. Got to be worth a grand even in its current state – maybe 2k running and with an MoT. There are bikes like this all over France going cheap because of this registration problem, and more coming along now bikes have to pass the equivalent of an MoT. A lot of specials owners are finding they're being turned away due to unauthorised modifications. If your schoolboy French is up to it, might be worth taking an empty van over and trying your luck. Bonne chance...



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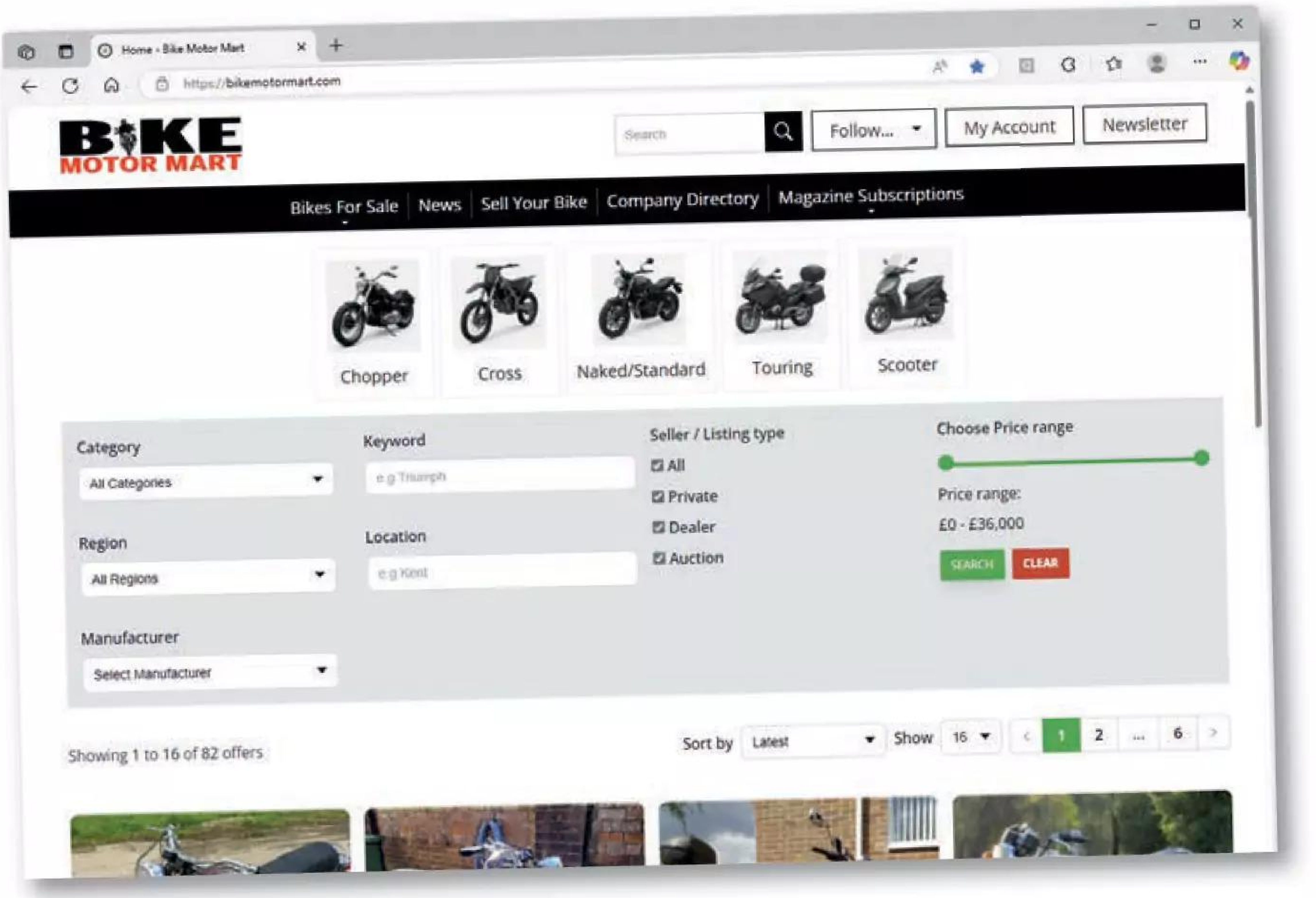

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## For Sale

### Armstrong MT500

1995, Ex Mod, new MoT and just serviced, new tyres x 2, battery and other work, original exhaust and panniers, very good condition, £2150 ono. Please call 07424065312
1306

### BSA Shooting Star

£5,950, 1957, metallic green with correct dark green frame, Ariel style brakes, new Avons, probably the best available, offered from private collection, V5C, photos available, free delivery arranged. Please call 01723372219
1420

### Ducati Monster

1999, M600 Dark, 24,400 miles, good running order, history back to new, MoT August 2026, £2400 ono. Please call 07553536212
1228

### Gilera Strada

1964, lovely bike, all paperwork, just had new ignition, service etc, Café Racer, chrome guards, 125cc, £1850 ovno. Please call 07591935046
1419

### Book

Motorcycle (Grand Prix) Yearbook, 1999 to 2000, £10. Please call 07852921265 1493

### Ducati Indian 760

1987, £1,200, fully working and with an MoT until March 2026, comes with some spares, tyres, chain and sprockets and battery all fine. Please call 07849640478, Burnham 1320

### Greeves DB Sport

£2,600, 1960, 250cc, twin Villiers, good starter and runner, overall good condition, historic no tax or MoT required. Please call 01322275022
1423

### Haynes Motorcycle Manuals

Honda CB50/70/90, (67-77); CBR125R (04-07); CB250RS (80-84); CB500F/X and CBR500R (13-20); NTV600/650 (88-01) ST1100, (90-02); Suzuki GT/ZR/TS 50 (77-85); Yamaha DT/50MX/DT80MX (78-95); VMX1200V-MAX (85-03); Triumph Daytona 995i (97-00), £8-£20 plus post and packaging.
1491

### Honda 125SS

1970, £3,800, full respray, lots of new parts, show condition, tax and MoT free, owned for one year, need the space for new bike. Please call 07817888836
1479

### Honda CB360

1974, £3,000, 1974, mint just had major service 11,300 miles, original hand book and workshop manual, rides perfect you will not be disappointed, contact for details. Please call 01443226706
1309

### Honda CB750

1975, in vgc, t&t exempt, UK bike, 27,000 miles, good colour, genuine reason for sale, £6000 ono. Please call 07546034695
1240

### Honda CBF300

2018, 5971 miles, MoT April 2026, full service, full tank of petrol, valeted, good runner, very good condition, £4000 ono. Please call 01158755159
1483

### Honda CG125

2001, 2001, blue, kickstart, CDI, new MoT, tyres x2, battery, brakes, very good condition, £1100 ono. Please call 07424065312
1307

### Honda NC35

2002, part of collection, 12,500 miles, three owners, bought it in 2016, never raced, privately owned, genuine buyers only please, £7750 ovno. Please call 07572862332
1486

### Honda NC750XDM

£4,500, 2021, 12,218 miles, full service history, bike as new condition, black, heated grips, no issues with bike, owned for three years, full set of luggage never been used, excellent bike for commuting or weekend travel, contact for photos. Please call 07890334567
1413

### Honda NSR250

MC16, full fairing, original with cracks, £100. Tank no rust, £195. Seat plastics with lens. Headlight PGMII, £185. CDi C1580A gear cluster set, £100. Please call 07816043480. 1487

### Kawasaki 750 Zephyr

1991, £150, 1991, frame with V5 wiring loom, 4 into 1 exhaust. Please call 07981367294
1308

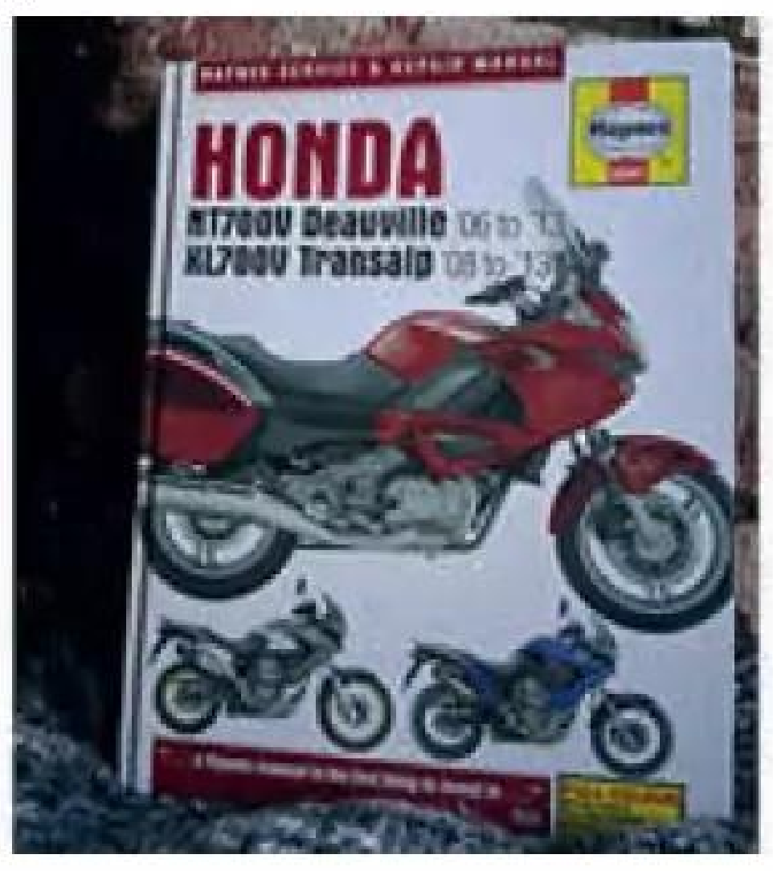
### Kawasaki W650

2001, no MoT, collection only, £1800 ono. Please call 07880693730
1484

### Magazines

Bike magazines, 1990 to date too many to list Superbike, Streetfighters, CMM mainly, £50 the lot, buyer collects, Cambs. Please call 07944468223
1492

### Manual



Haynes Manual for Deauville 06 to '13 and Transalp 08 to '13, very good condition, £15 can post. Please call 07852921265
1518

### Motolug Trailer

Motolug collapsible single motorcycle trailer, dismantles quickly without tools, ideal for storage/transporting in a small van, estate car etc, built in loading ramp, lights number board, no longer used, £450. Please call 01268735135
1238

### Motorcycle Tyre

unused motorcycle tyre Dunlop K82, 3.00-18 never fitted to a rim, bought in error, wrong rim size, any reasonable offer please. Also unused motorcycle tyre Mitas H.03 3.25-18 Universal block tread pattern never fitted to a rim bought in error, wrong rim size, any reasonable offer please. Please call 01268735135
1233

### Motorcycle VHS Videos

all as new, £5 each plus postage, Hailwood 91-TT, Joey Dunlop, Agostini. Suzuki Factory Service Manual GSX750F Suzuki SV650 99-08 BMW R11RT Riders Manual. Please call 01432265726
1482

### Suzuki T500

1973, £4,600, superb condition, runs great, owned nine years, fully rebuilt before my ownership by Phil Yates Motors, very reliable, fantastic relive the 1970s. Please call 07772880323
1488

### Royal Enfield

70 reg, 12,000 miles, good condition, lots of extras, carrier, panniers, engine crash bar, choice of seats, 'N' cat, but sold with 12 months MoT, £2750 ono. Please call 07436002647 1242

### Royal Enfield 4T Turbo

1967, new pistons, new clutch, runs, rides, ready for restoration, engine bearings rumbling, buff log book, V5, looking for £1600, buyer collects Tamworth, Staffs. Please call 07949168179 1412

### SYM 125

2010, mint condition, 8 months MoT, only 3500km, only used on sunny days. Please call 07778742954 1243

### Silencers

Triumph Thunderbird pair original factory peashooter silencers, rear section excellent condition, off low mileage bike, no rust corrosion, undamaged, £500 collection only. New chrome sprocket cover boxed, £300 plus £7 postage. Please call 07434513161 1232

### Honda 250

2002, MoT, immaculate mechanically and paint work, no rips, new back shocks, fully rebuilt carbs, new crank shaft, filters, oil new tyres, very clean, top box extras, £1800. Please call 02920883315 1526

### Suzuki 500

1975, Sprint Hillclimb bike, quick reliable with V5 and some spares, £2450 ono. Please call 07368293401 1490

### Suzuki GSF600S

2003, £1,550, in black, few marks and scuffs but wears it age well, 10 months MoT, HPI clear, owned since 2016, standard bike apart from Oxford heated grips and NWS hugger, Bridgestone BT23's front and rear 4mm tread, recent new chain set, new battery, comes with 2 keys, manual an tool kit. Also Haynes manual. Please call 07790570192, South Yorkshire 1443

### Suzuki GSX750F

2004, 13,000 miles, new tyres, good condition, full service, full MoT, new battery, good runner, full tank of petrol, £4500 ono. Please call 01158755159 1480

### Suzuki GSXR600

2002, 34,677 miles, runs beautiful, full tank of petrol, full MoT, full service, new battery, £4000 ono. Please call 01158755159 1481

### Suzuki GT750B

1976, £8,995, US import 1996, purchased 2015, engine rebuilt by Phil Jones, 900 miles since rebuild, electronic ignition, lovely condition, starts and runs perfectly, tax and MoT exempt, good home required. Please call 07834242378 1478

### Suzuki RGV250 VJ22M

1991, £9,000, 1991, plus std parts and works manual, too much to list, ring for details. Please call 07597614456 1284

### Triumph 1200

£1,500, 1991, early Triumph 95% finished no room or time to finish, contact for more info usual box of extra bits, carbs, tank etc. Please call 07934561576 1424

### Triumph Bonneville

2017 onwards, black leather Café Racer seat, Triumph printed on the back hump, as new condition, only used twice cost, £200, bargain £90. Please call 07505003737 1236

### Triumph Speed Twin

1961, £5,950, immaculate, black/cream paintwork, matching numbers, new Devon rims/sprockets, tyres, seat, controls etc, Boyer ignition, many receipts, previous MoTs, photos, V5C, stunning show winner this year, delivered free. Please call 01723372219 1237

### Triumph Thunderbird

£5,000, 1966, D reg, full engine restoration, 300 miles, presently all receipts of rebuild, superb condition, runs beautifully. Please call 07883077061 1422

### Triumph Thunderbird 900

Peashooter silencers rear sections, new boxed, no longer available from Triumph, immaculate condition, original packaging, fits 95 onwards, also fits Legend, £850 collection only. Please call 07434513161 1416

### Yamaha VMAX

1998, £3,200, full power, excellent original condition, garaged, 17,500 miles, well maintained, owned 11 years, lots of paperwork, MoT April 2026, all fluids recently changed, some extras. Please call 01633264177 1489

### Yamaha VMAX VMX1200

1985, £3,250, 23,000 miles, MoT March 2026, full power Canadian import, Supertrapp exhausts, V5C in my name, just had oil and filter etc, will become 'historic' MoT and tax exempt next year, £3250, may take p/x Norfolk 07969510071. Please call 07876704268, Norfolk 1312

### Zongshen Zip-Star 250

£500, 2007, good condition, runs well, low mileage, on Sorn, looks and sounds good. Please call 07869081495 1281

### Suzuki front alloy wheel

£85, for Suzuki Road bike, nos size 518 x 1.40. Please call 01407830562 1485

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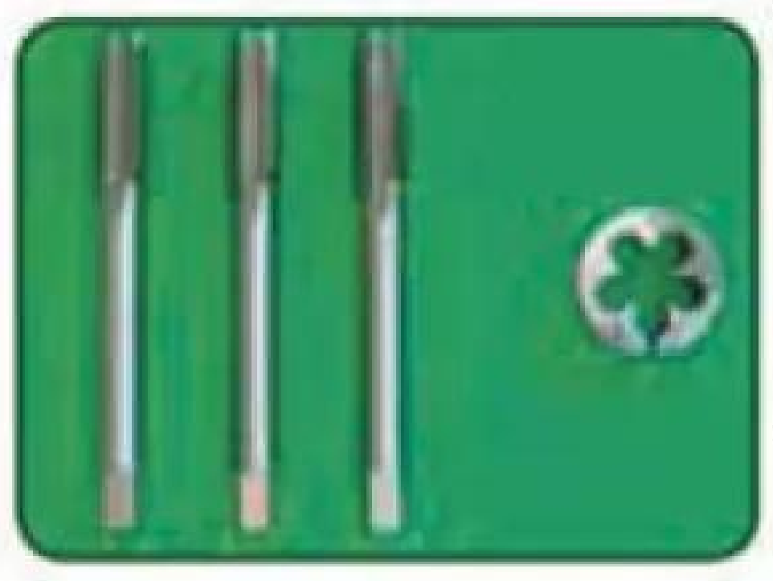
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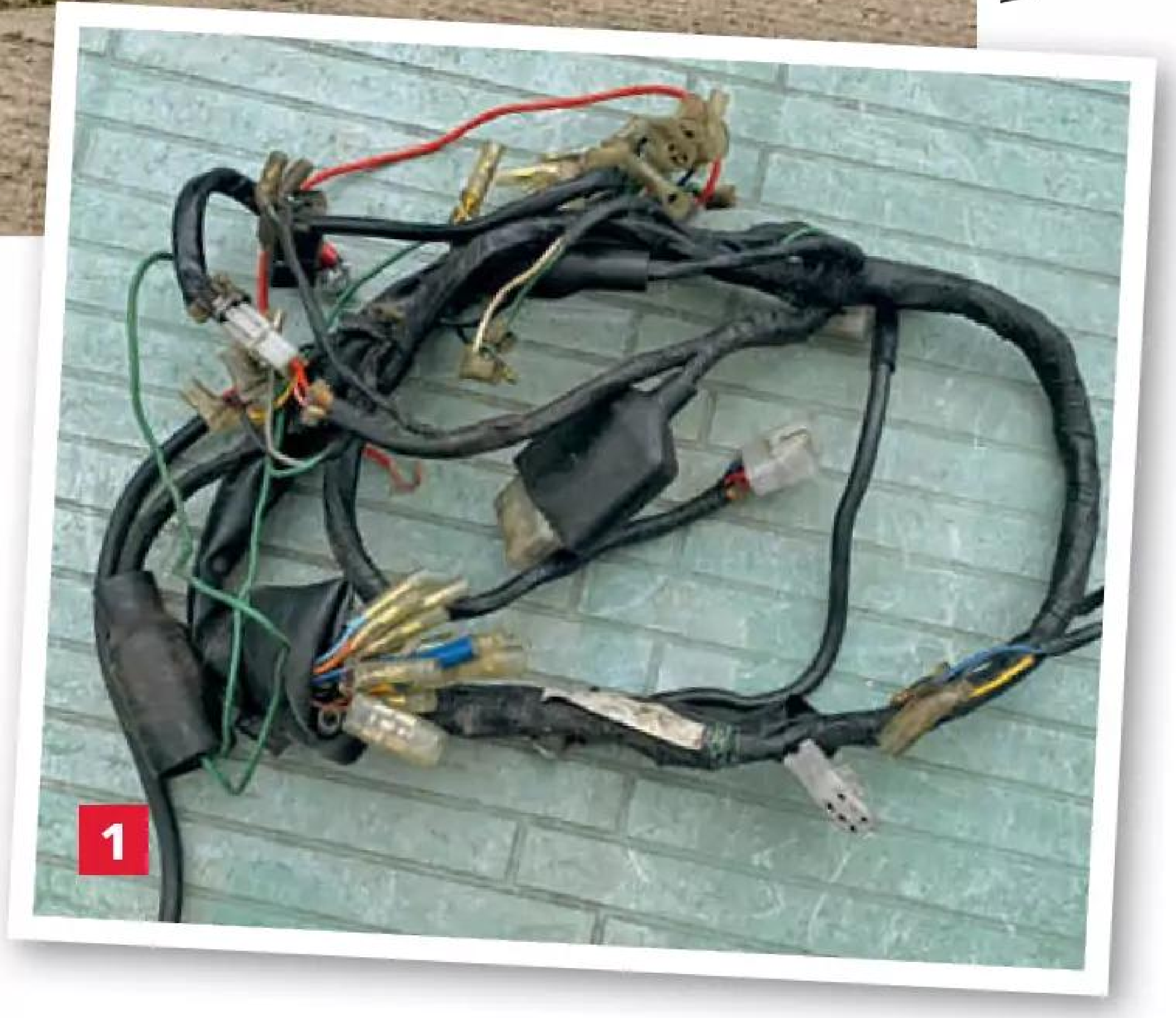
Another lovely shot of some Honda CB400 Fours!

WORDS AND PICS: **MARK HAYCOCK**



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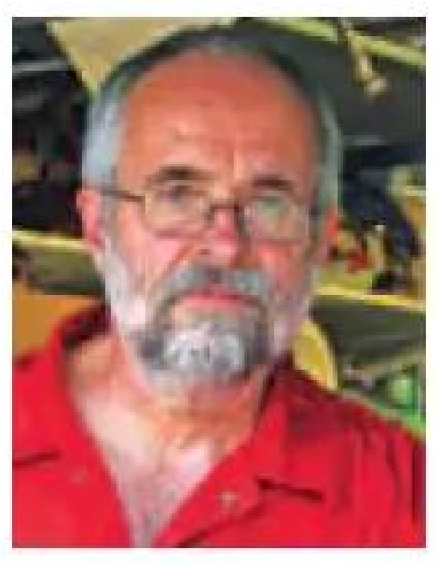
## *Project Honda CB400 Four* ***Part 7***

# Lecky love!

Mark is looking at the electrics of his soon-to-be-super Honda CB400 Four this issue.

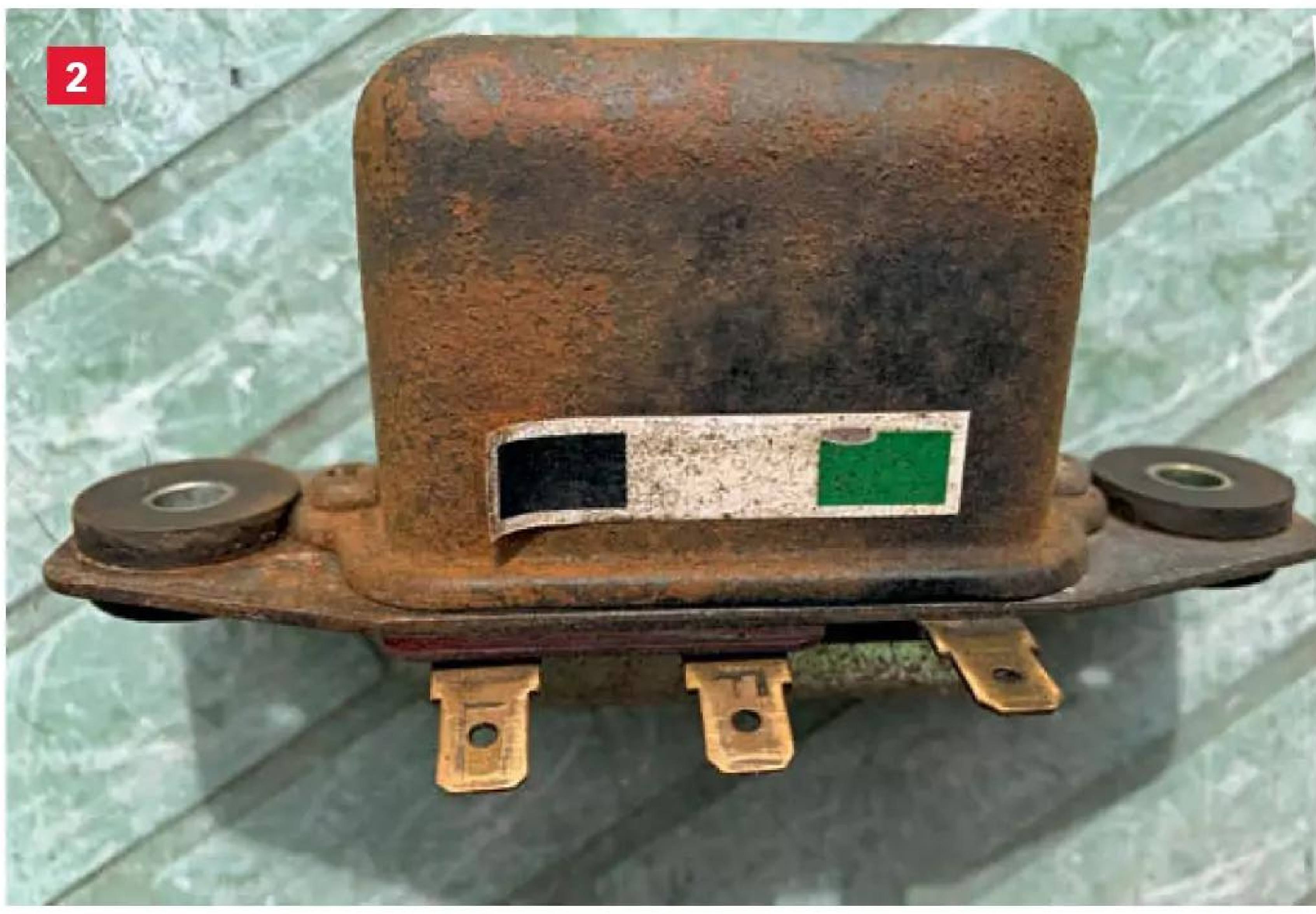


**OK then, there's not much to do on the engine now so for a change I will look at the electrical side of my Honda CB400 Four.**

I have a box of electrical components which should be a complete set and a wiring loom **(Photo 1)** which looks a bit grim, but it does seem to be complete and just needs one or two repairs and cleaning up.

Some of the components have suffered rather a lot over the years, such as the voltage controller **(Photo 2)**. This is a device made by Nippon Denso, working with a three-phase alternator and a similar arrangement is found on other contemporary Honda and Yamaha bikes. The controller works in the old-fashioned way with coils of wire and contact points, but I have always found them to be more reliable than later solid-state devices. You can even adjust the output if necessary.

The coloured rectangles on the outside refer to the colours of the connecting wires on a Honda, i.e. black for +12v power, white for the connection to the alternator field coil and green for earth, so you cannot get mixed up. The terminals



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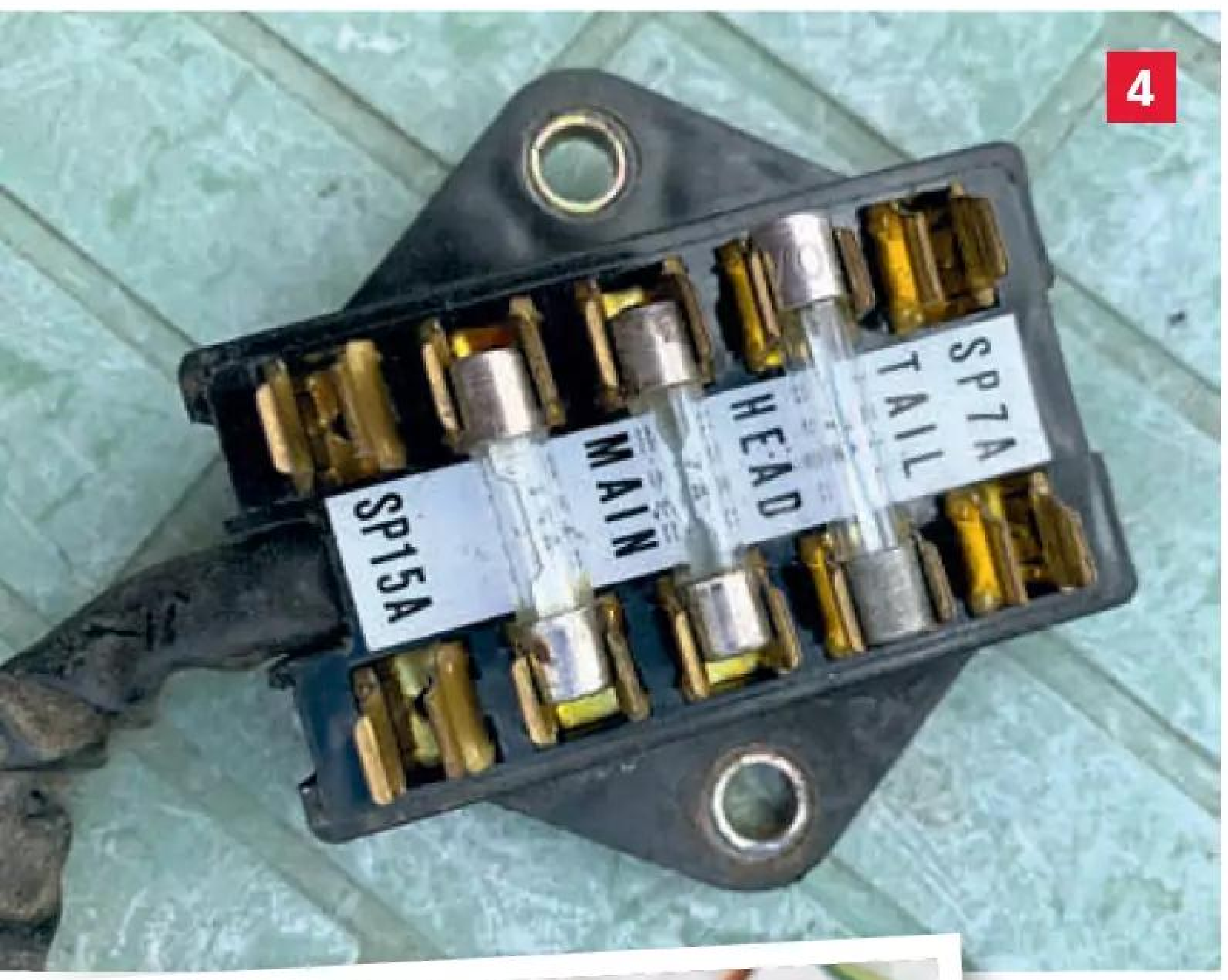

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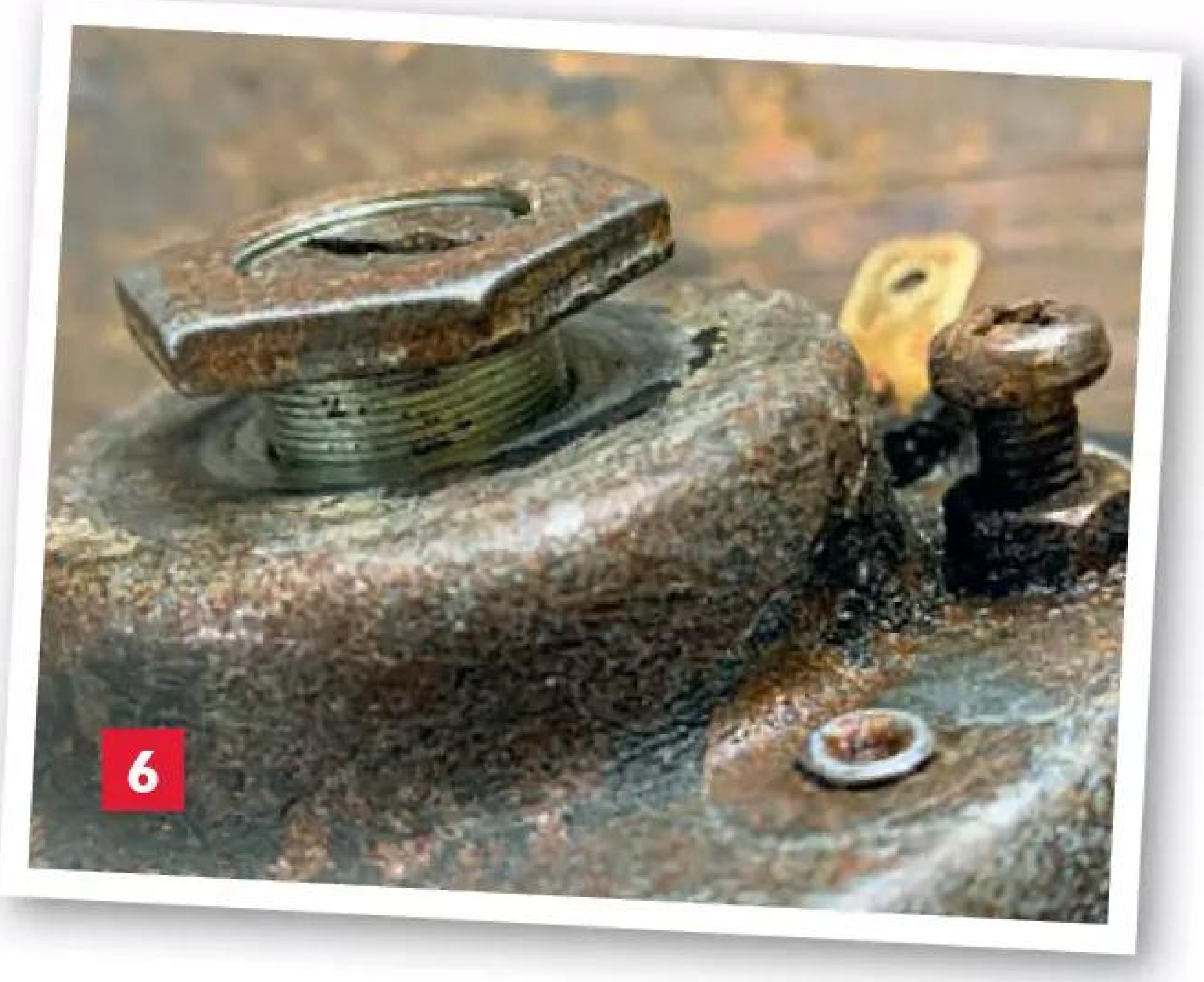
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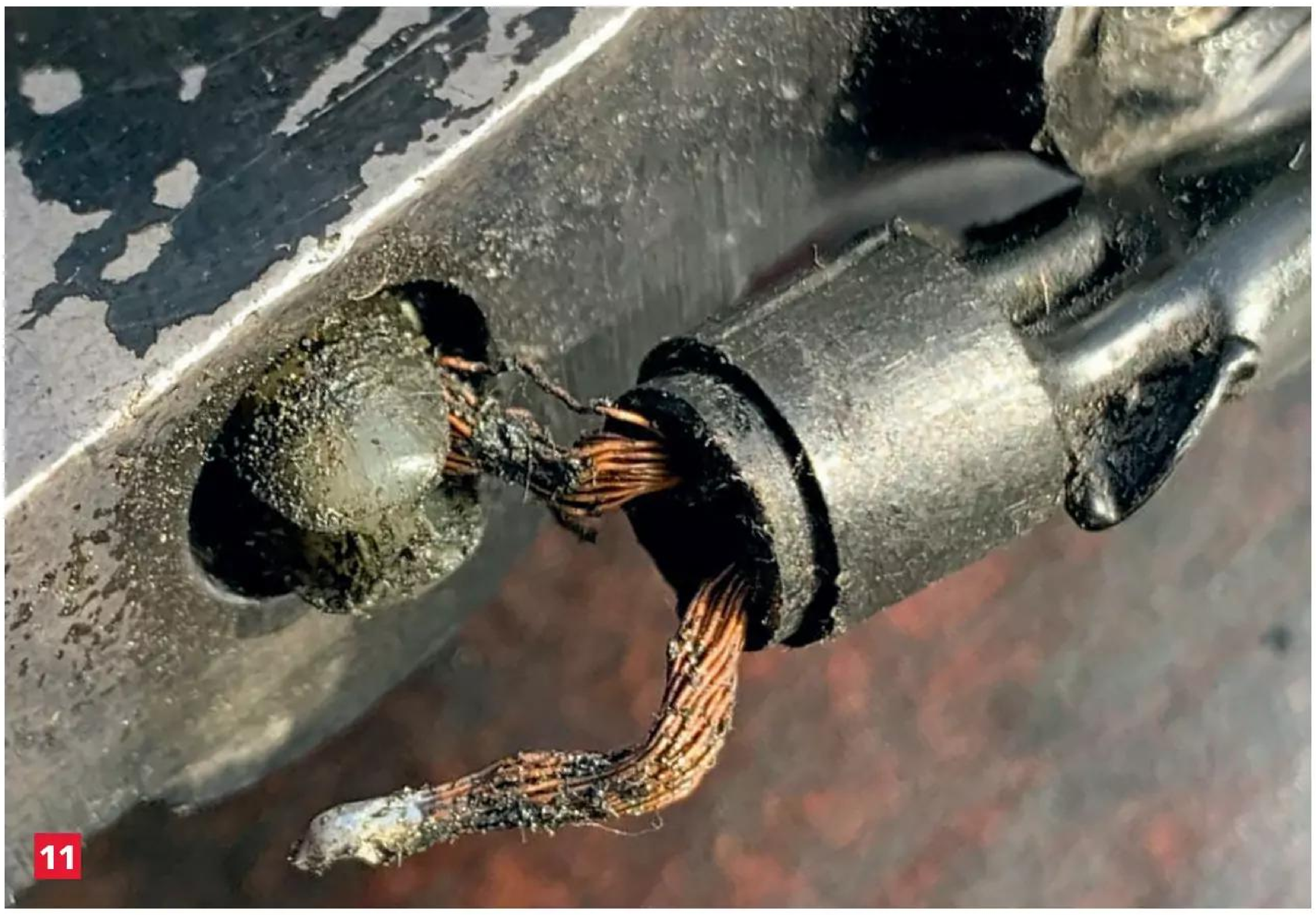

11

themselves are also identified as L(ive), F(ield) and E(arth). After a little treatment with WD-40 on the outside, it looks a bit more presentable **(Photo 3)** although it is not normally visible.

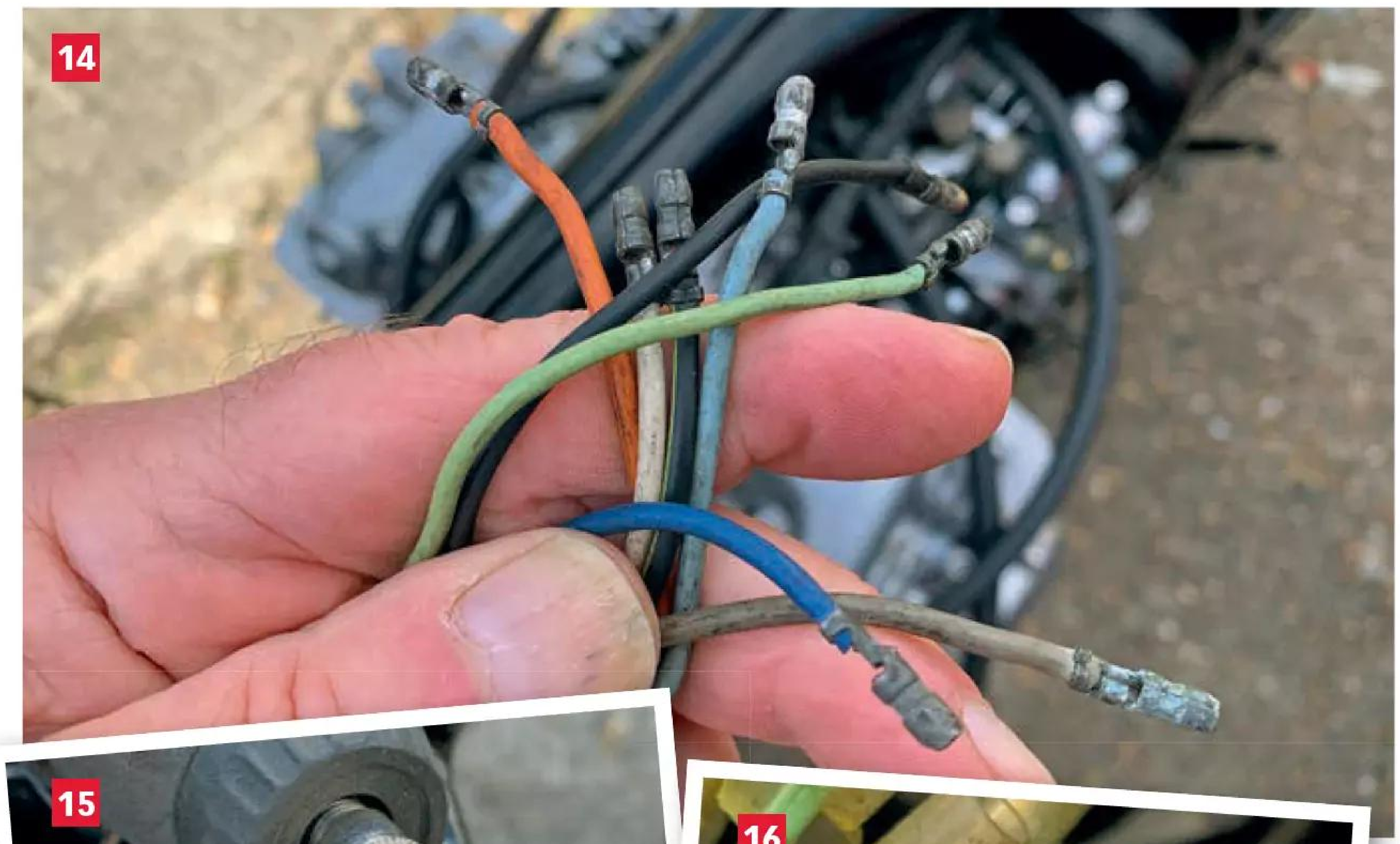
The fuse box is a little bit sad really **(Photo 4.)** I think two of the fuses could usefully be replaced by ones that actually fit properly, and maybe a couple of spares might be added in the places set aside for them. I did think about replacing the whole lot, but I shall see how it goes for now.

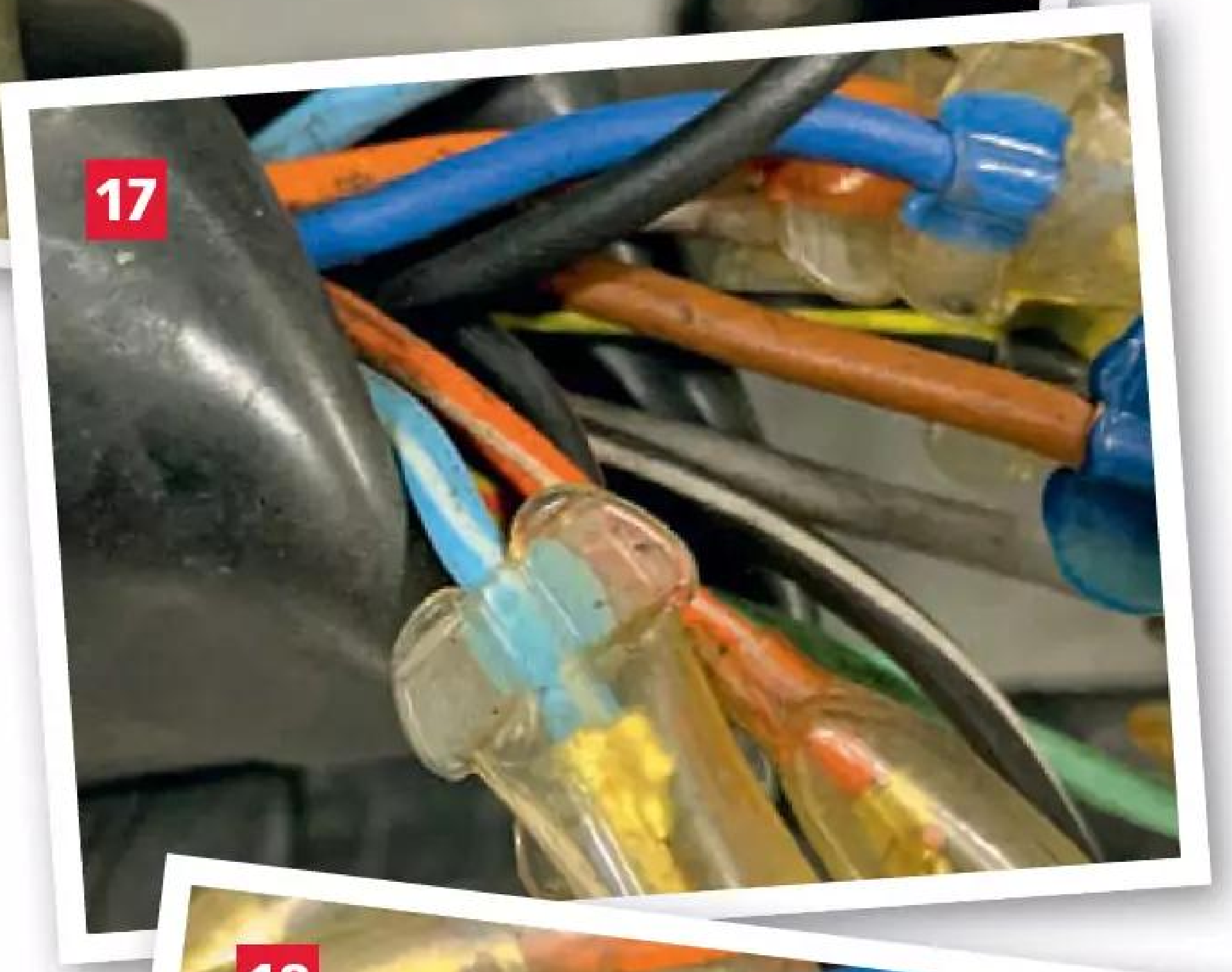
Even sadder is this **(Photo 5)** which looks like it might have been an electric horn once. No, it didn't work of course. I thought that perhaps it needed adjusting and this is a slightly odd process. The thin nut is used to hold the horn on the bracket **(Photo 6)** and it screws on to a component with a fine thread. This can be turned with a screwdriver and the process is, apparently, you turn that until you hear some sort of sound and leave it at the best setting, then you undo the lock-nut on the tiny screw nearby and adjust the screw for the mightiest blast. It still produced nothing, but I understand it is possible to carefully bend back the crimping to dismantle the works to clean things up. That looked like a great way to get a screwdriver through my hand, so maybe not.

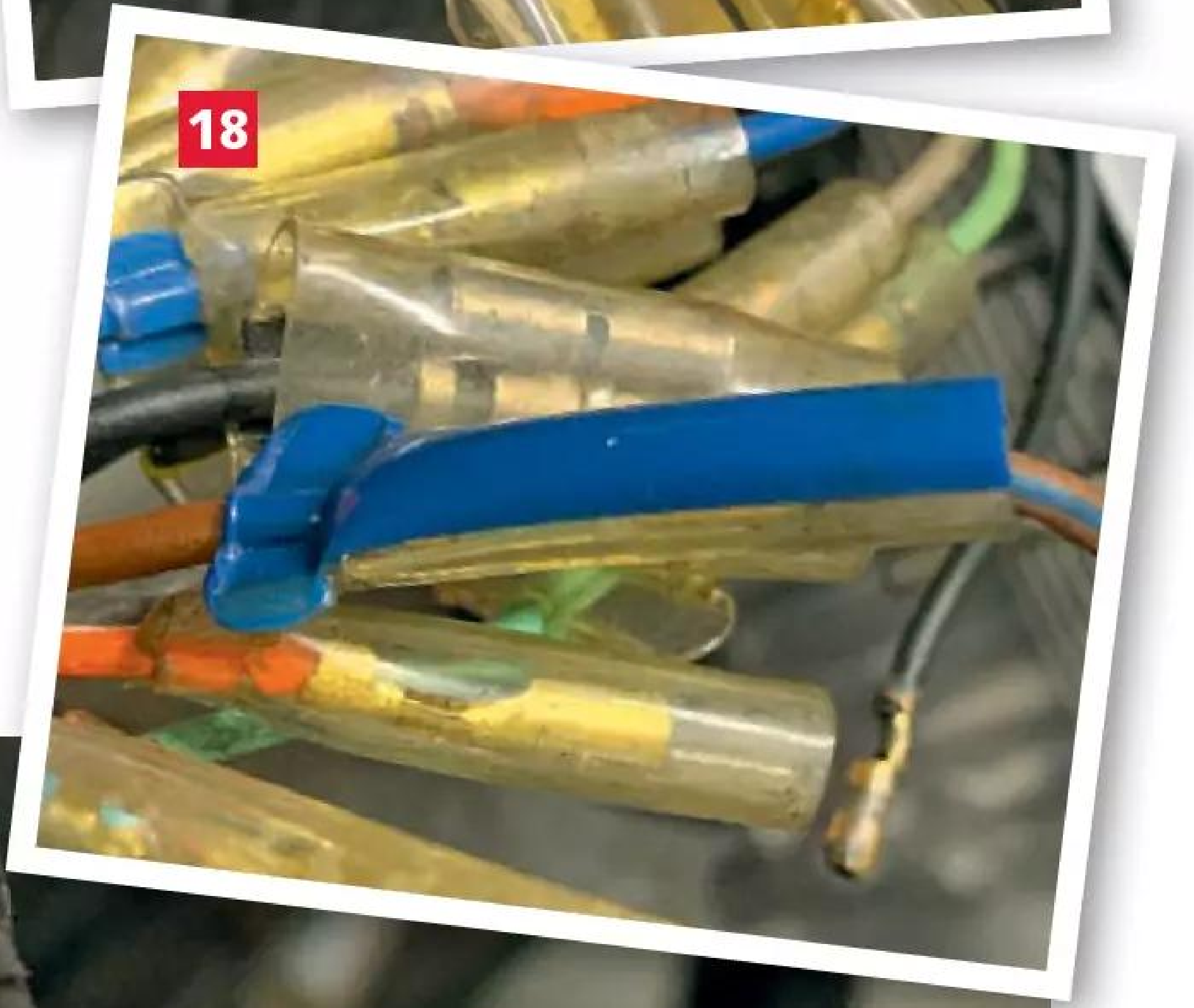
In my electrical spares collection, I found this **(Photo 7)**. It did work and seemed quite promising, but I noticed it does say on it 6V. It must have come from a Honda C95 project which I thought I sold complete… Time to stop messing around and I bought a brand-new horn, which turned out to be incredibly cheap. Two of these **(Photo 8)** for £6.59 delivered! And now I also have a 12v spare.

I will test the handle-bar switches when the electrical system is working, because I have found that often a switch appears not to be working when tested with a multimeter, it is OK after being used a few times with the power connected.

The left-hand set **(Photo 9)** looked rather care-worn but the dark speckles came off with my thumbnail and the surface beneath was fine. Yes, I know it is not the right colour, but who cares? However, this **(Photo 10)** was less satisfactory and after a gentle pull of the wire it became this **(Photo 11)**. A look







inside **(Photo 12)** shows us that it is a microswitch to detect when the clutch lever is pulled in. The idea is that it is possible to start the engine when it is in gear, provided that the clutch is disengaged so the bike does not jump forward unexpectedly. It can be pressed out **(Photo 13)** and my immediate reaction to it is a firm NO, I cannot deal with that so I will sort out the electrical system to dispense with it.

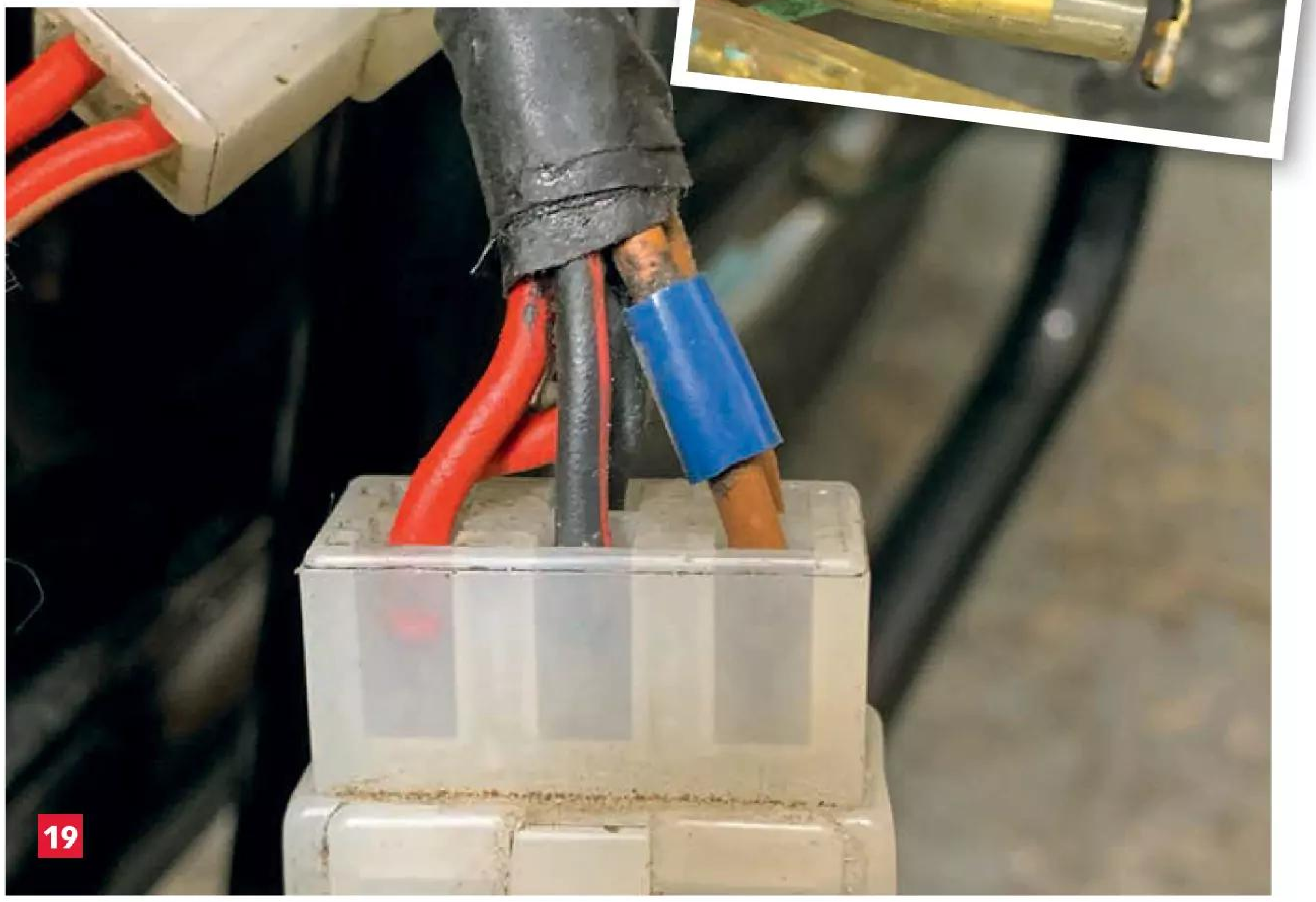
Now on to the wiring and everything seems to be there, but the connectors are rather corroded **(Photo 14)**, but the male ones can easily be cleaned up with this little Scotch-Brite style mop **(Photo 15)**. The female connectors are a bit harder to process and all I can think of to use is a round needle file **(Photo 16)**.

Fitting the loom is a bit of a challenge and I realised that it would have been easier to do that directly after fitting the engine. The Honda manual has a few diagrams showing the wiring layout as well as the schematic, and it is best to follow the standard plan. One change from earlier bikes is that what might be termed the nerve-centre with a multitude of connectors is not inside the headlamp shell as there simply is not enough room. Instead, the space under the fuel tank is used and here there are quite a number of connections to be made.

There are also a couple of points which might cause confusion and in **(Photo 17)** we seen one of them. You can see there are two wires which do not connect to anything on a UK bike. Orange is used for the left-hand indicator wiring and light blue for the right-hand, but here we see orange and white and light blue and white. These were used to provide a datime light as a safety feature by illuminating the front indicators when running, by means of dual-filament bulbs. This was only for the USA I believe, so in the UK they are not needed.

The other thing is that you will see a brown and blue wire which does not seem to connect to anything. It actually connects to the brown wire with the blue sleeve as in **(Photo 18)**. The other end of that wire is here **(Photo 19)** and again the brown wire has a blue sleeve. This is related to differences in specification for tail-light operation between different countries, still using the same loom layout.

Next time: more electrics – because they are the bane of any restoration! **cmm**



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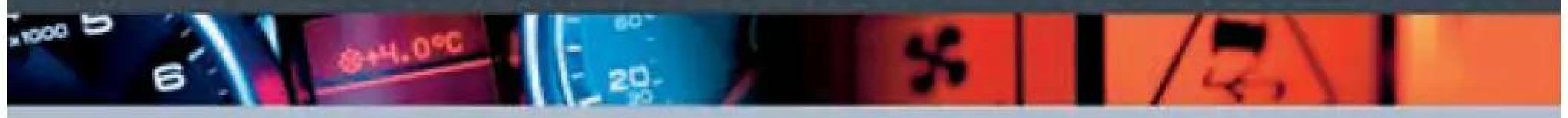

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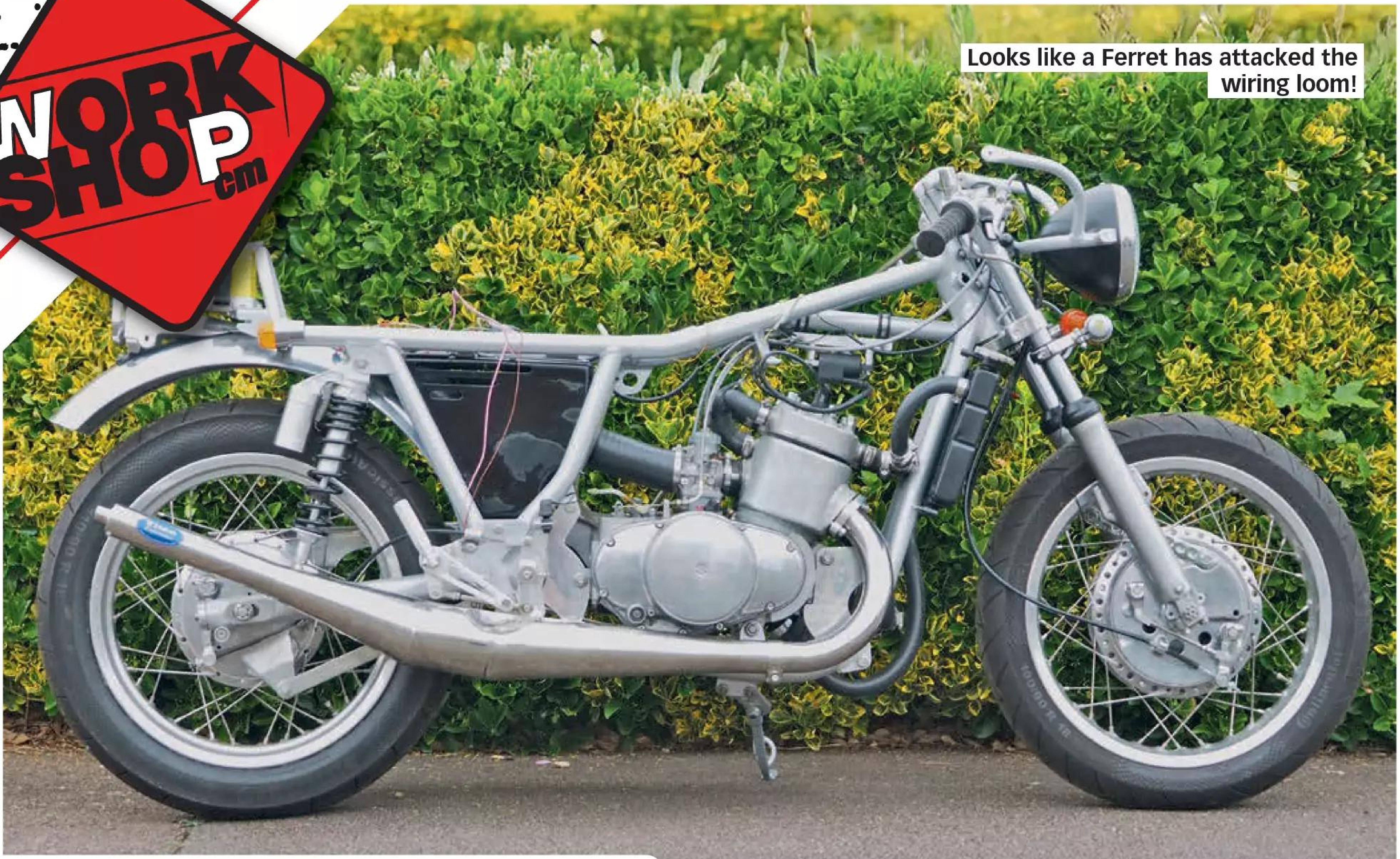


Looks like a Ferret has attacked the wiring loom!

WORDS AND PICS: **STEVE COOPER**

## *Project Rickuki* *Part 14*

# Problems, problems!

Imperial nuts, confounding rotors and oil-pumps all feature in this instalment!

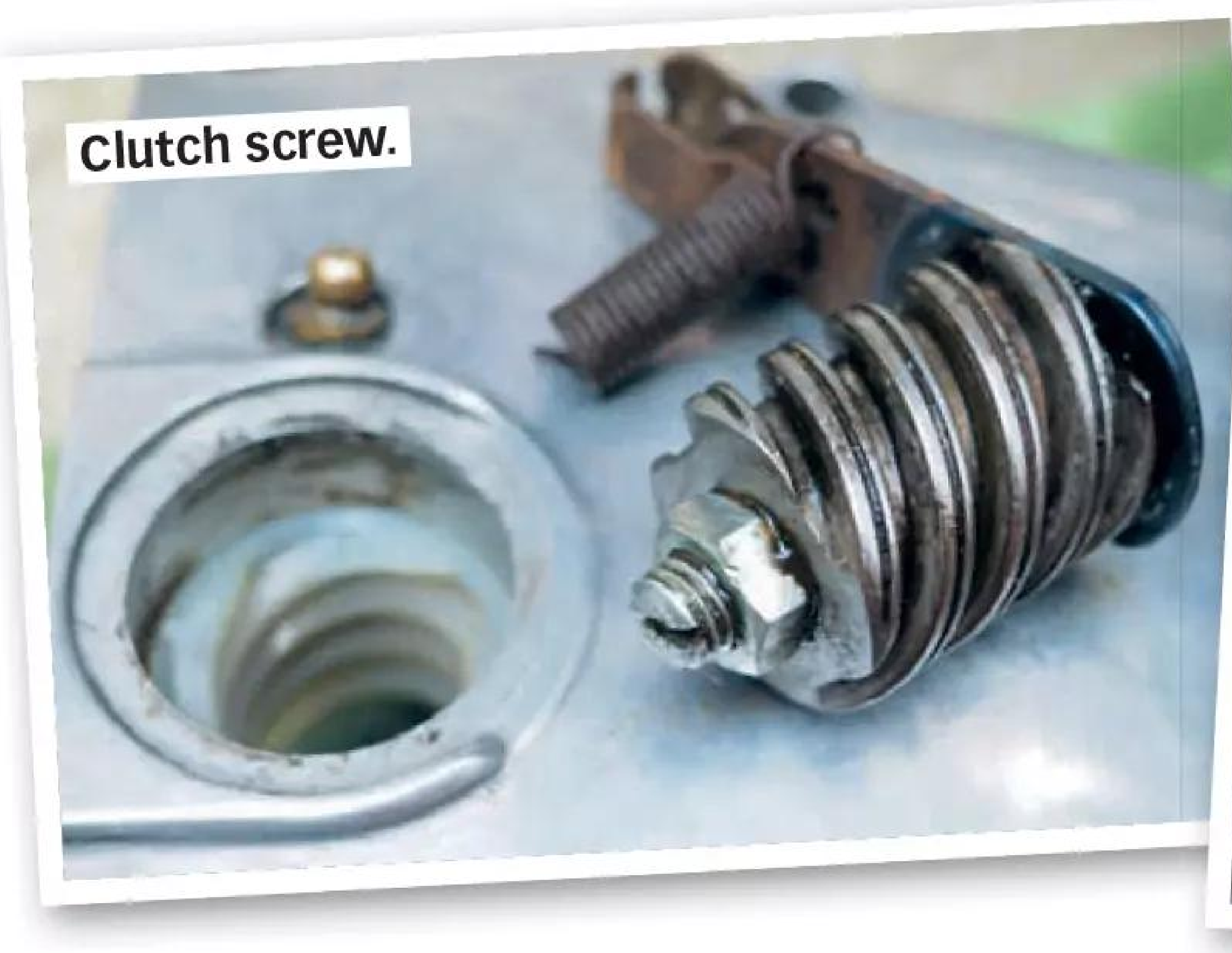
**It's getting there at last and I can see light at the end of the tunnel. Well, sort of!** Visually the Rickuki may not look as if there's been much progress made but, in reality, nailing on lots of the smaller stuff has seen the collection of boxes in the workshop dramatically reducing.

The headlight is mounted off the main/upper fairing bracket and, crucially, this means the little black plastic lock stops that sit behind the light can now prevent the forks from touching anything. The engine cases are all going back with cap head Allen bolts as there's no driver for authenticity with a special. Therefore, I bought another selection of stainless fixings online for pennies and then cut down those that were over length. It's a seriously cheap way to do the job if you're not building a 100 point-perfect show bike.

The engine is a tight fit but with some assistance from a mate it was shoehorned and safely bolted in. The 500 twin's clutch is actuated via an Archimedes-like screw-cam on the left of the engine which moves the push-rod. Four decades of sitting next to the front sprocket does little for its cleanliness so it was removed, cleaned and regreased. Unlike the Yamahas that are my more normal fare, not only does the Suzuki unit come apart without need to resort to pliers but it also comes with its own protective rubber cover. Proper engineering here rather that an 'it will do job', etc.

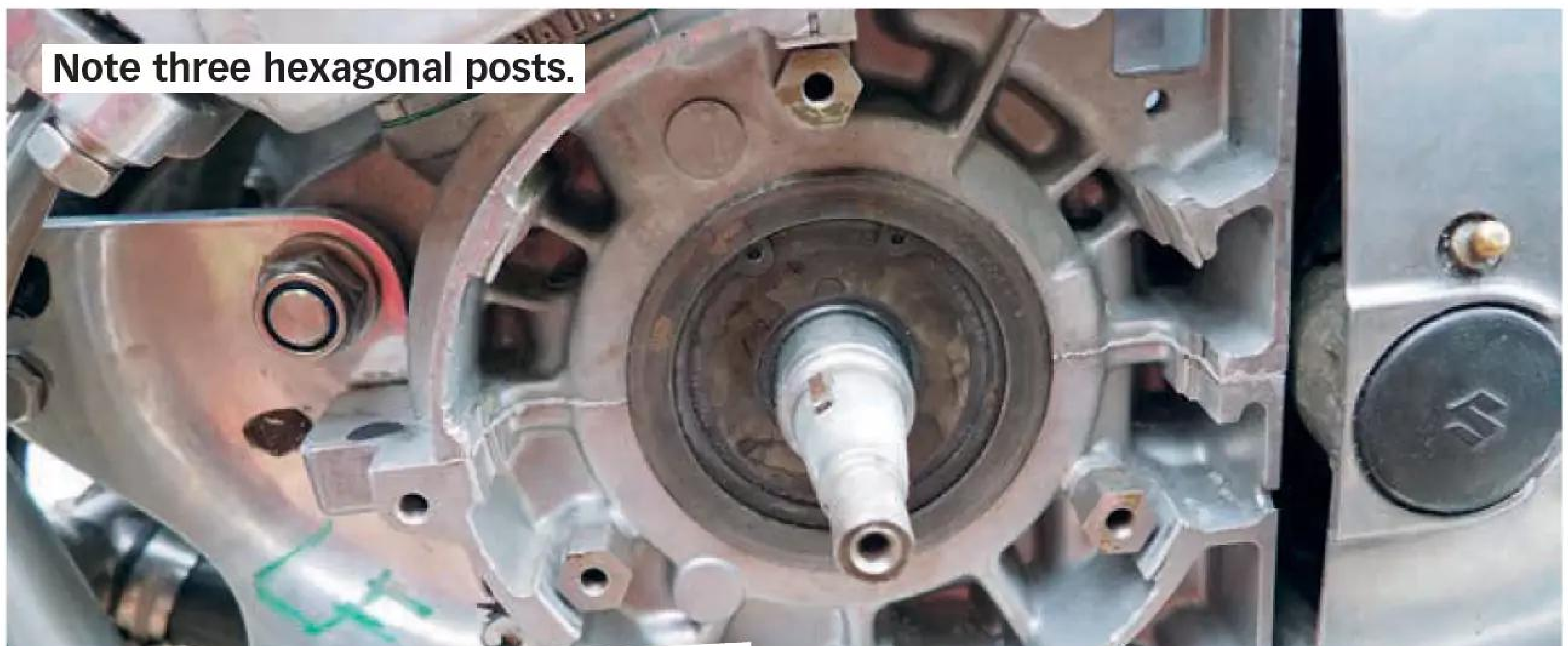
There was some rather serious head-scratching when it came to fitting the flywheel magneto. The engine in the Rickuki is from a GT500 rather than a T500, as I learnt to my cost when we

**Rickuki's headlight and lock-stops refitted. Nice!**

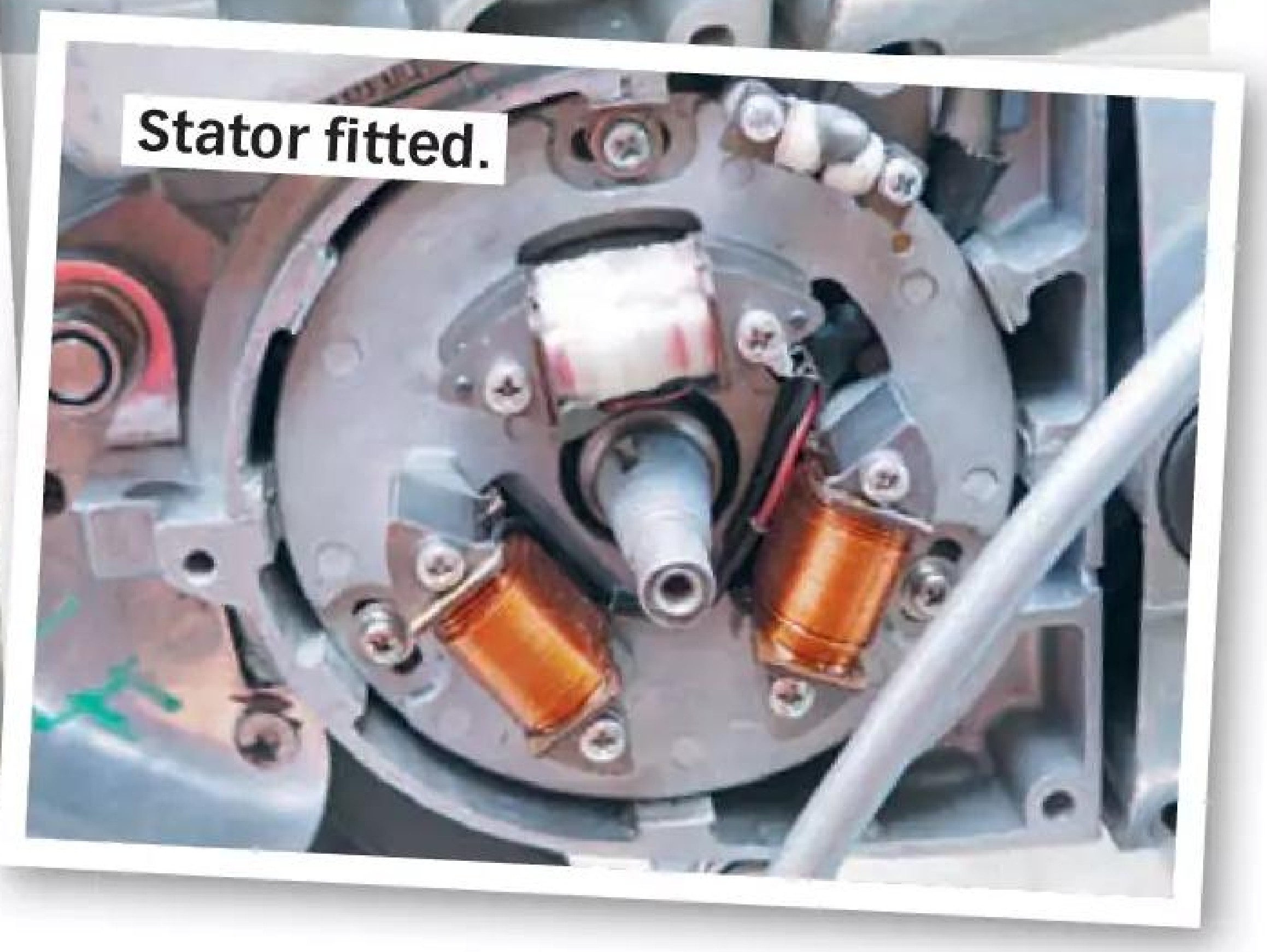


Clutch screw.

Clutch screw cover.


Note three hexagonal posts.

Thread cleaning.


Stator fitted.

found out the cranks were different. Having had the unit reconfigured for the later motor – longer crank taper – as the saying goes: '…imagine my surprise when the stator plate wouldn't fit!'

Lots of profanities later and a sanity check with guru Pete O'Dell of The Motorcycle Works, the conundrum was solved. Someone had previously set the GT motor up to run an aftermarket ignition system which apparently spaced the sensor plate off the crankcases. Some neatly engineered hexagonal posts were stopping the plate from seating.

Duly removed and the threads beneath cleaned up, order was once again restored and the Rex's Speed Shop unit successfully mounted. Knowing just what a pain it can be to remove flywheels, the last job on this side of things was to lap the magneto to the crankshaft with some fine valve grinding paste. With the half-moon key in place the rotor could then be fitted… If only I'd not misplaced the mounting hardware!

For once, over the tenure of this project, I'd actually done some strategic planning which had seen various panels dispatched to my sprayer. Sorry, no sneak previews yet, but once collected everything was carefully wrapped and stowed away other than the seat unit.

The reupholstered seat squab required fitting to the seat unit and this should have been an easy task, but the four captive bolts turned out not to be metric – which is rather obvious when you remember that Rickman was a British business. Investigation suggested they'd be ¼-inch UNF (Unified National Fine) and not a size I'd ever used. However, searching through 'The Tin of Hope', four suitable nuts were found and the squab successfully bolted to the base… One more job off the list and I really don't care if the nuts are slightly rusty!

One area of the build has come in for a serious slice of critical appraisal: the battery. Originally, we had a lightweight lithium unit fitted, but having taken advice from specialists infinitely more competent than me I've realised the Rickuki may be on potentially dangerous territory.

Yes, lithium batteries save weight, but at what price? When one of my industry contacts said: "…only fit one if you like bike fires!" I began to get worried. It would appear the whole 'lithium thing' is something of a fad and that the obligatory MOSFET regulators they need to very critically control charging are both expensive and not always as good as you might wish for. If you have such a

Tapers are lapped in.

Our Scoop calls this the 'Tin of hope'! Hope he finds it…

UNF nuts getting fitted…

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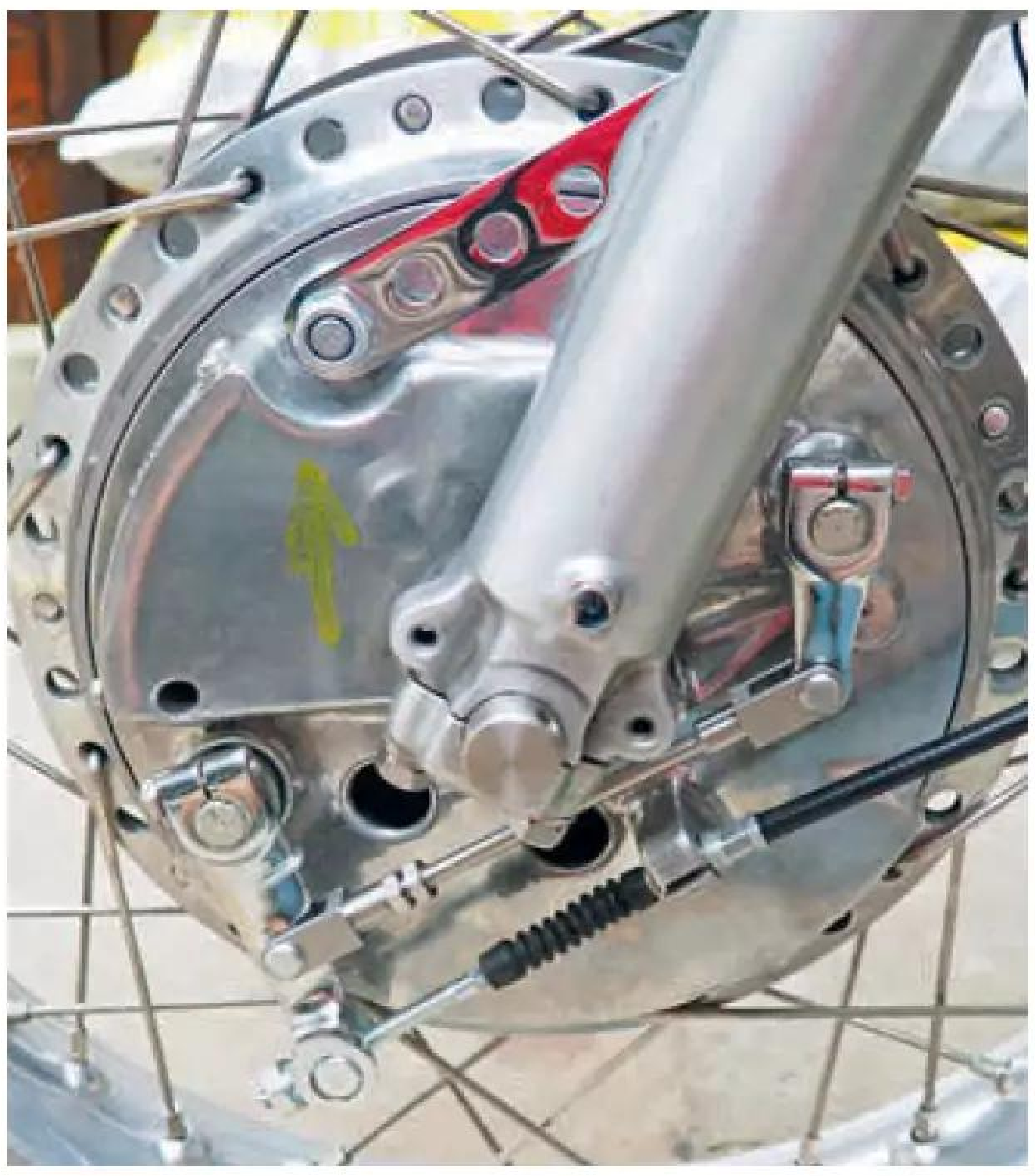
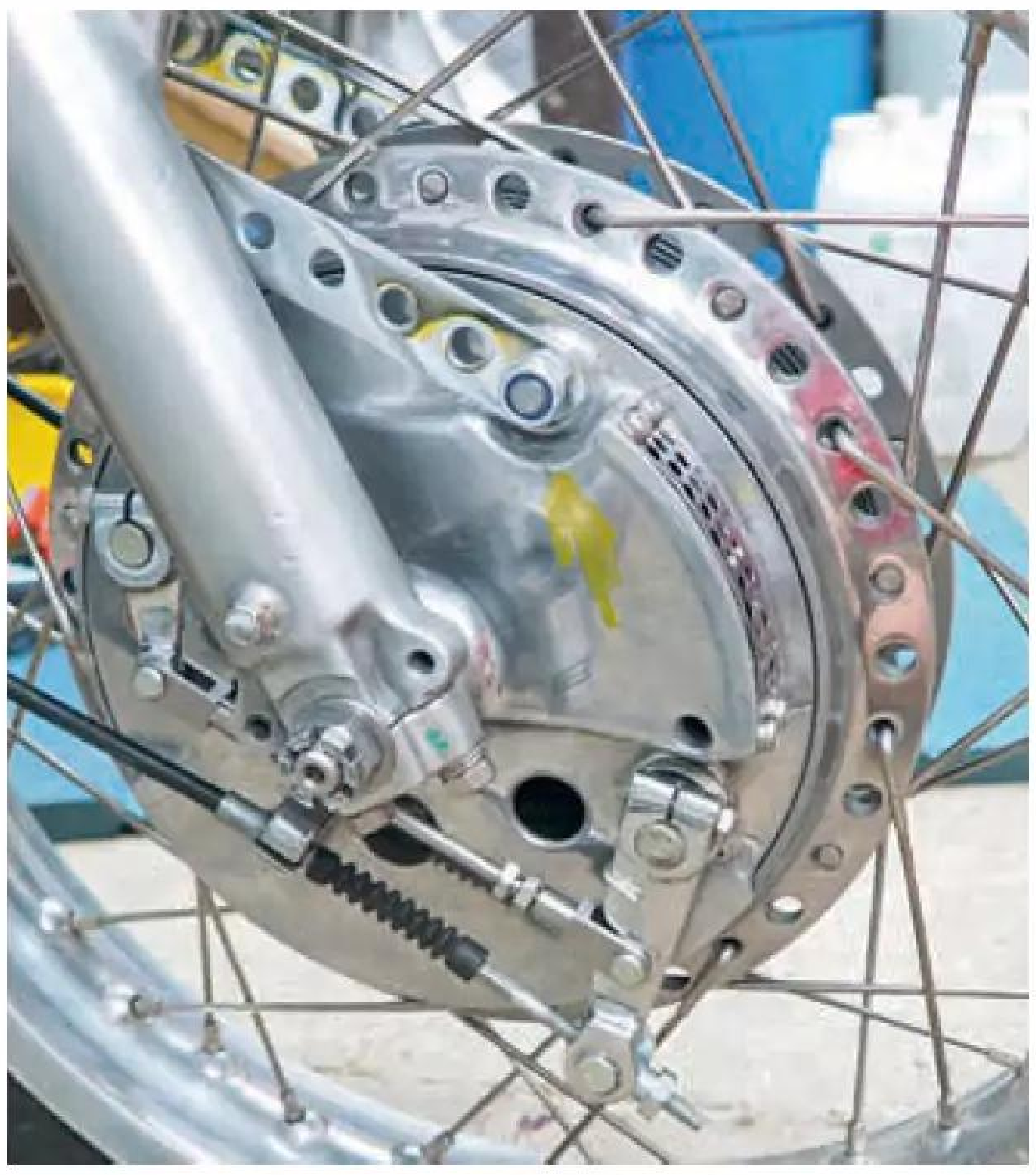


The four-leading shoe drum brake from the left-hand side.



And (you guessed it) the 4LS drum brake from the right-hand side!

system that works, then good on you, but the Rickuki will go for proven lead/acid accumulator.

All of which now means the battery tray needs to be widened by just two naffing, pigging, chuffing millimetres to accommodate the MotoBatt kindly supplied by Wemoto. Another job on the list then!

Like pretty much every part of the build, the oil-pump was yet another unknown quantity and being 'mission critical' I thought it best to get it totally overhauled. Although Suzuki never offered rebuild kits for their oil-pumps, the collective wisdom of the classic scene has divvied up all the pertinent data with regards to seals.

A morning with Suzuki T500 specialist, Pete O'Dell, had the Rickuki's pump stripped, ultrasonically cleaned, and rebuilt. If you're in need of the seal kit or a pump rebuild, contact Pete. Oh, and we've also confirmed that the one-way valves in the oil lines are working as they should so there should be no let-by of two-stroke into the crankcases.

Last task this instalment is some attention to the 4LS (four leading shoe) front brake. With new stainless steel clevis joints and link rods it had all been rebuilt but I really wasn't sure I'd got it right… or even had the correct operating arms. Given that it was just lumped in a box when I got the project who knows what you might have?

Yes, I know a 4LS unit isn't as good as modern discs and I am aware that these highly desirable units sell for £1500-plus. However, I like the style, don't want to sell it, and I'm happy enough to ride within the brake's limits. So there!

Other than some adjustment of the rods, the only other real job was to move some of the arms round one notch on the brake cams. Often this can be a faff as the splined end can partially fall back inside the drum, making replacement nigh-on impossible. Thankfully, the air vent holes on this particular unit means you can hook a large Allen key inside the push everything outward… Result!

And for the eagle-eyed out there, yes, the torque-arm nuts were originally secured with a fancy bent metal clamp device but in the modern world I reckon some M10, fine pitch, Nyloc nuts are more than up to the job.

Next time I make a start on the electrics and confuse myself… again! Turn over a few pages to hear what Ferret has to say about batteries… ***cmm***

**Thanks this month to:**

Rex's Speed Shop **www.rexs-speedshop.com**

Pete O'Dell **www.themotorcycleworks.co.uk**

Ferret **07765 832420**

## Where does that bit go mister?

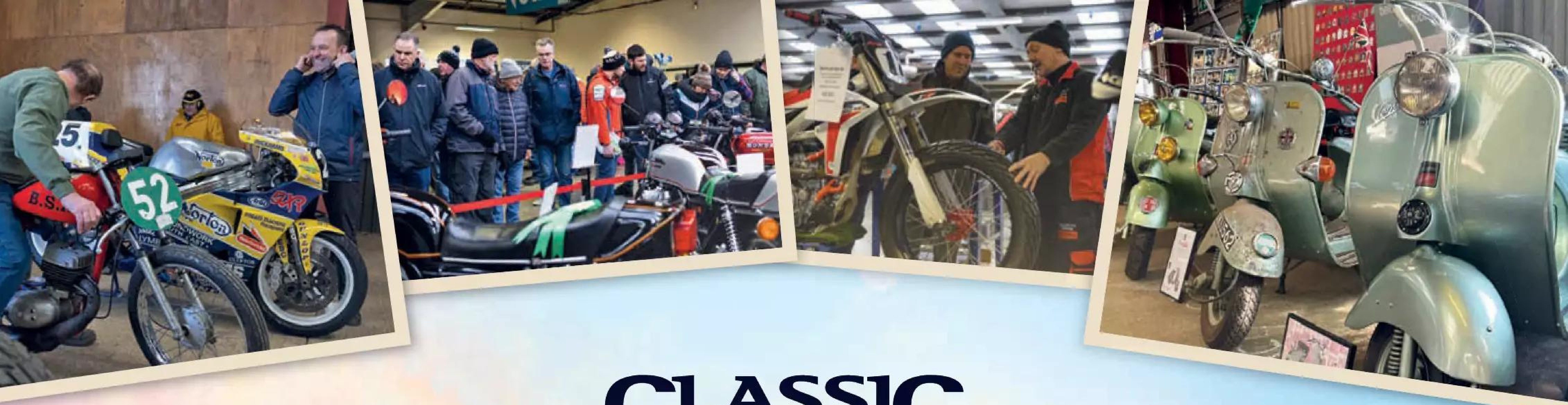
**Most restorations or renovations can test your patience at times but, truth be told, we probably secretly revel in the various challenges these old bikes throw at us.**

**And, thanks to the modern electronic age, we have the unquestionable blessing that is the digital camera. These devices are invaluable when it comes to sequencing which part goes on to something else and then what follows it. OEM parts books are a seriously useful aide-mémoire, but they aren't infallible and generic, aftermarket, workshop manuals can sometimes feature every damn model in the range but yours.**

**So, with all that and more in mind, you rightly expect the Rickuki to be photographed within an inch of its life, right? Well, that's what I thought I'd done but apparently not – Murphy's Law apparently states: '…no matter how many images you take you will always need one more!' And this has been the case more than once when studying the bike with an apparently random fitting in hand and no obvious place for it.**

**When the bike was stripped, I had the apparent foresight to put related components into sealable polybags with labels and the like, but I've still tripped myself up on numerous occasions. Ultimately, it's all gone back together well but there have been several instances where I've worn that 'perplexed-and-puzzled' look.**

**Trawling back through all those reference shots only reinforces the fact that you genuinely can never have too many shots of a project. Even if the images in your factory parts book include the odd error at least you have a reference point. We specials builders would sometimes kill for something only half as accurate!**



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Batteries are getting smaller. Is that good or bad? We shall see!

WORDS: **FERRET** PICS: **MORTONS ARCHIVE**

## *Project Rickuki* *Part 14*

# Love lithium?

In a shock (ahem) return to CMM, sparks specialist Ferret talks about batteries and Scoop's Rickuki project.

A modern battery delivered: waste?

**Lithium batteries have, in recent years, become very much 'on trend'. Probably because of the technology finding its way into all sorts of everyday applications like phones, laptops and electric cars.**

Compared to our faithful lead-acid friends, they deliver massive increases in cranking power and substantial savings in space and weight. What's not to like? Well, quite a lot as it happens.

The first question to ask is: 'Do we actually need more cranking amps?' In the case of the Rickuki, which is not equipped with an electric starter, the answer, unsurprisingly, is an emphatic 'No'. In the case of most other bikes, the original battery as specified by the manufacturer was perfectly adequate when the bike was new, just as it will be now. So again, the answer is usually 'No'.

What about the weight-saving then? The GT500 from which the Rickuki has acquired its engine was originally equipped with a seven-amp-hour battery weighing 2.5kg including acid. An almost identical generator was also used on the GT250 X7 which utilised a five-amp-hour battery which weighs about 1.9kg when filled. Therefore, there's not actually a huge amount of weight to save here.

A Jap four-powered Harris Magnum generally had a 14-amp-hour lump residing in the tail unit. I don't recall ever hearing anyone moaning about the handling though. And how many of us lot could do with shedding a few pounds? Exactly!

Right, according to my back-of-a-beer-mat calculations. this modest saving of sprung weight might enable our esteemed client to arrive at the next set of traffic lights as much as 0.0639 seconds sooner than his riding buddies... bragging rights are so important you know.

He will then be able to enjoy spending precisely this amount of extra time stationary whilst waiting for them to turn green. Only the Parrishes, Haslams, Dunlops, etc., of this world would even notice. Don't kid yourselves. Furthermore, have you seen the price of them?

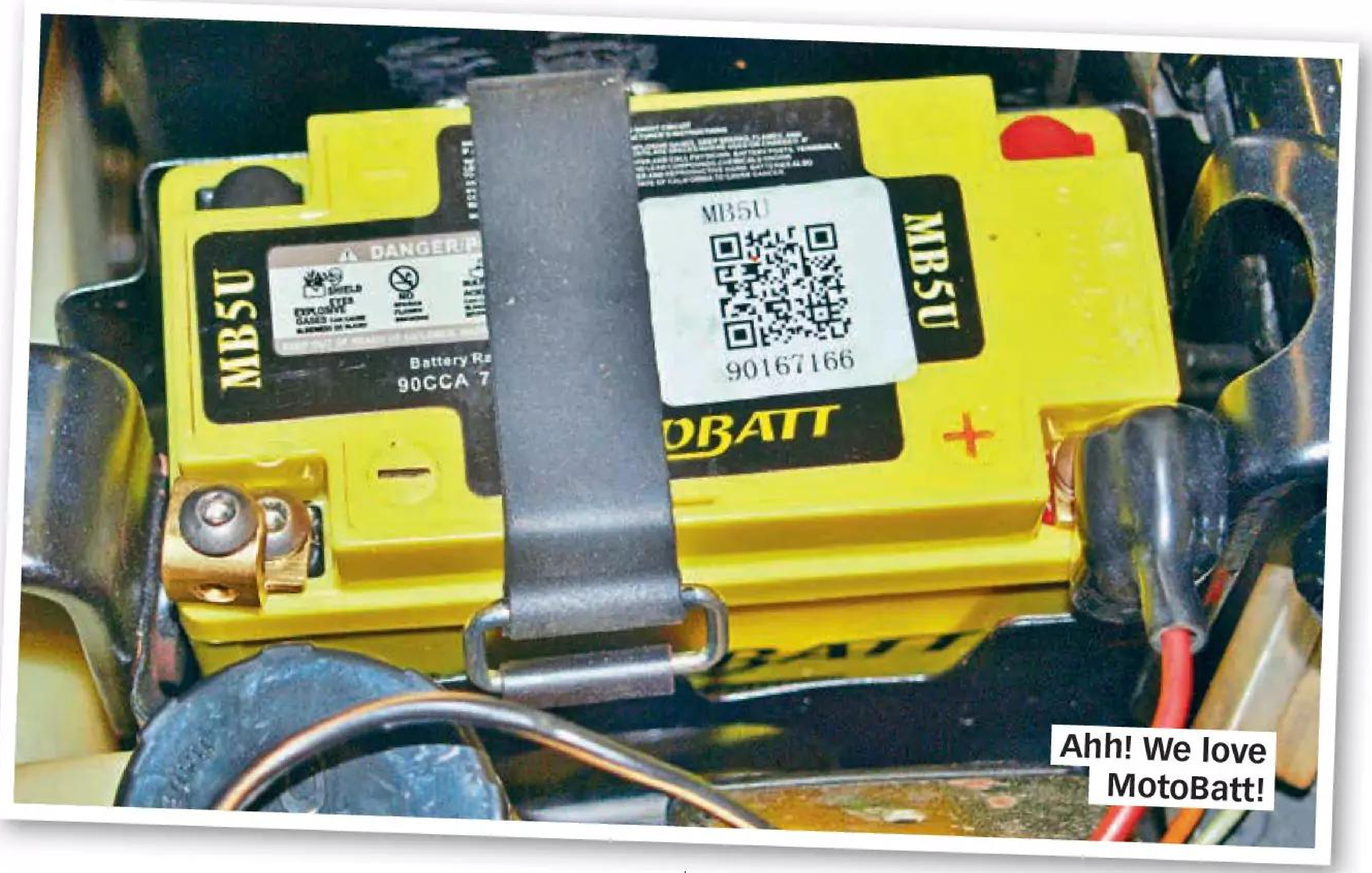
Oh, I'm not done yet. The real fun starts when you want to keep them properly charged whilst riding. Lithium batteries need a very carefully controlled, constant charging input. This is quite easy to achieve from a specially designed (and bloody expensive) charger powered from a 240-volt, 50Hz domestic mains supply. However, it is very difficult to achieve this when the power supply is a motorcycle alternator providing an output that varies considerably according to its rotational speed. The rectifier-regulators designed to be utilised with lead-acid batteries are – categorically – not suitable for use with lithium types.

The problem is nobody seems to make a rectifier-regulator unit that is genuinely up to the job. There are a few who make the bold claim to have done so but I remain unconvinced. Needless to say, they're also a darn sight more expensive.

There are some lithium battery manufacturers who will tell you that a standard rectifier-regulator is okay to use. Well, they would, wouldn't they? They're in the business of selling lithium batteries – let me know how the lawsuit goes. I know of at least two long-established and very well-respected UK-based companies involved in the field of motorcycle electrics who refuse to have anything to do with this type of battery.

Some misguided souls are of the opinion that their problem will be solved by the use of a MOSFET-type regulator. Sorry, not true. No doubt there will be folk saying: 'Well, mine's been alright.' My main suppliers of such things clearly state on their website and packaging that none of their products are to be used with a lithium battery. I am happy to take notice of them for they know what they are on about.

So, what are the possible consequences of ignoring the above? Quite apart from the very substantial expense of purchasing the battery, plus a mains-powered charger and an allegedly suitable rectifier-regulator, there remains a very real possibility of the battery catching fire in the event of a charging system fault. The same fault that would most likely have been caused by using a lithium battery in the first place.



Ahh! We love MotoBatt!

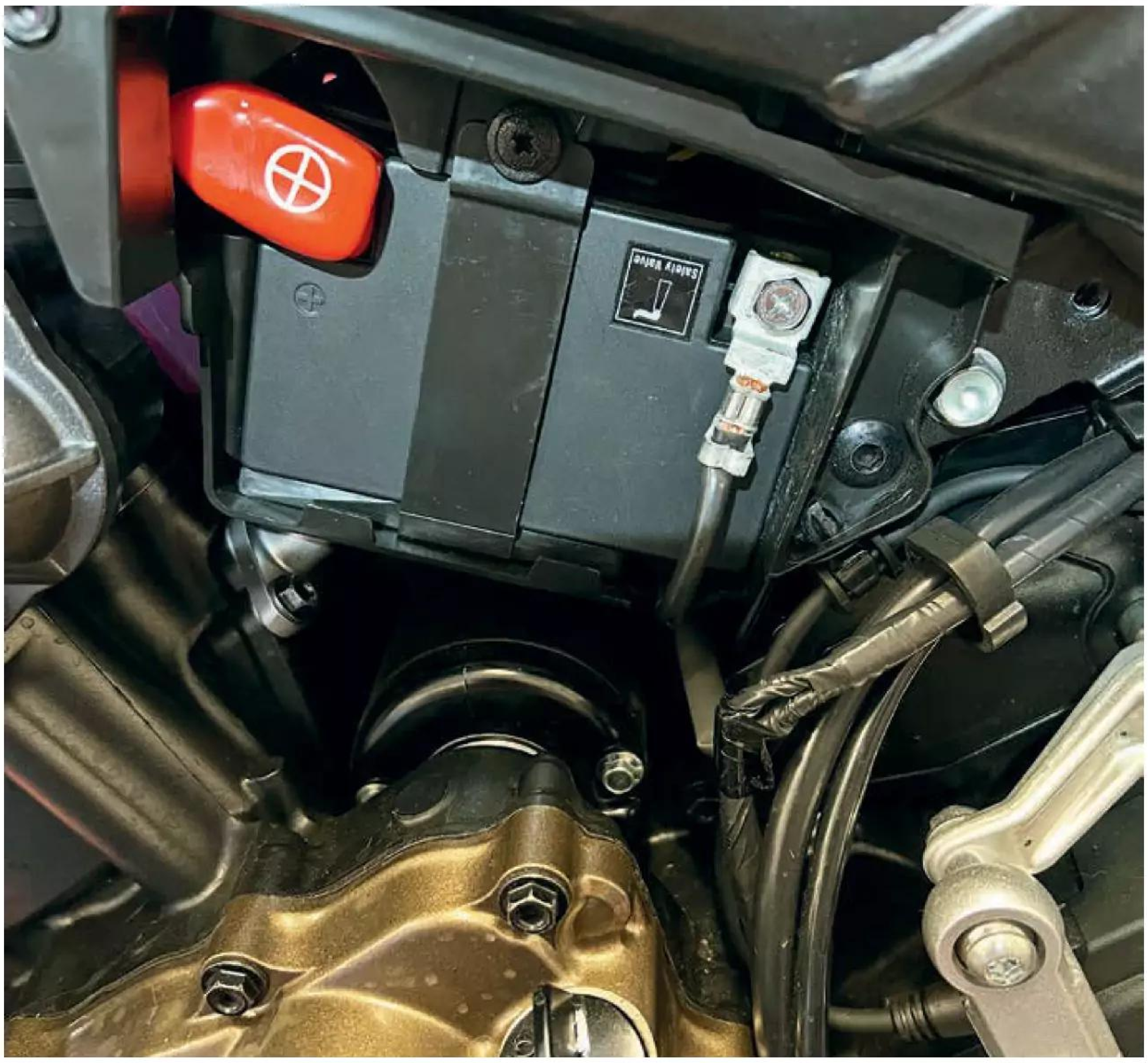
And boy, when they do go up, truly prodigious quantities of noxious white smoke will be emitted for an impressive amount of time, and I wish you the very best of luck in putting it out. It's a chemical reaction so all the traditional methods involving starving it of air just ain't gonna work.

So, to sum up, insisting upon the use of a lithium battery on a classic motorcycle is an excellent way to add a considerable sum of money to the cost of your build in order to solve a problem you didn't actually have. In addition, this so-called 'solution' will cause you another problem, which in turn requires further expense to solve, and in a way which is not actually certain to work. It is, therefore, ideal for those suffering with fragile egos and terminal vanity.

All of these 'improvements' increase the risk of a fire and the possible consequences of such a fire occurring whilst the machine is in your garage do not bear thinking about. Her indoors won't be impressed, that's for sure. Is your insurance going to pay up? Or will they wheedle their way out by saying the bike was modified? It's rather important to see 'the big picture' here, no?

The nearest thing to a 'peace of mind' set up I have so far encountered thus far is an antigravity battery with a Rick's Motorsport rectifier-regulator. It's also pretty much the most expensive. However, I'd still far rather use a tried and trusted lead-acid number on my bikes and spend the change on fuel, service parts, coffee and cakes because there's a much greater chance that I'll still have a bike to ride!

If you're still not convinced, then please don't ask me to come and wire it up unless you're happy to forgo the warranty! Rant ends! **cmm**



**Small batteries are often hidden away and not under the seat anymore!**

Post Cadwell the 748 needed love, and lots of it: Welcome to the pain of rescuing old Ducatis then mercilessly thrashing them.

WORDS AND PICS: **PAUL BERRYMAN**

### *Project Ducati 748 Part 7*

# Seven problems!

Our verbose V-twin lover is back! PB tells us what ails his cheap 748.

**Welcome to Volume II of the Ducati 748 diaries. Volume I was all about how I bought the cheapest Ducati 748 I ever saw (£2250), then rescued it from terminal decay.**

Getting an MoT and getting it to Cadwell for a superb track thrash had cost me an additional £748, making a brilliant and functional incarnation of a legendary motorcycle for just £2998.

The bike had performed amazingly at Cadwell, aside from a few glitches, the biggest of which sadly resulted in a 'game over' incident at the start of day two. This 748 turns the engine over on the starter button, when in gear, with the side-stand down. Crunch! It rolled forwards and then hit the deck when I gave it a casual prod of the button to warm it up. This halved the clutch lever and broke the seat unit off its hinges, meaning track day over.

I now had a broken bike to fix, but six other problems needed looking at after the hardest day's riding this bike had probably ever done. Some were minor, but some others? Let's take a look.

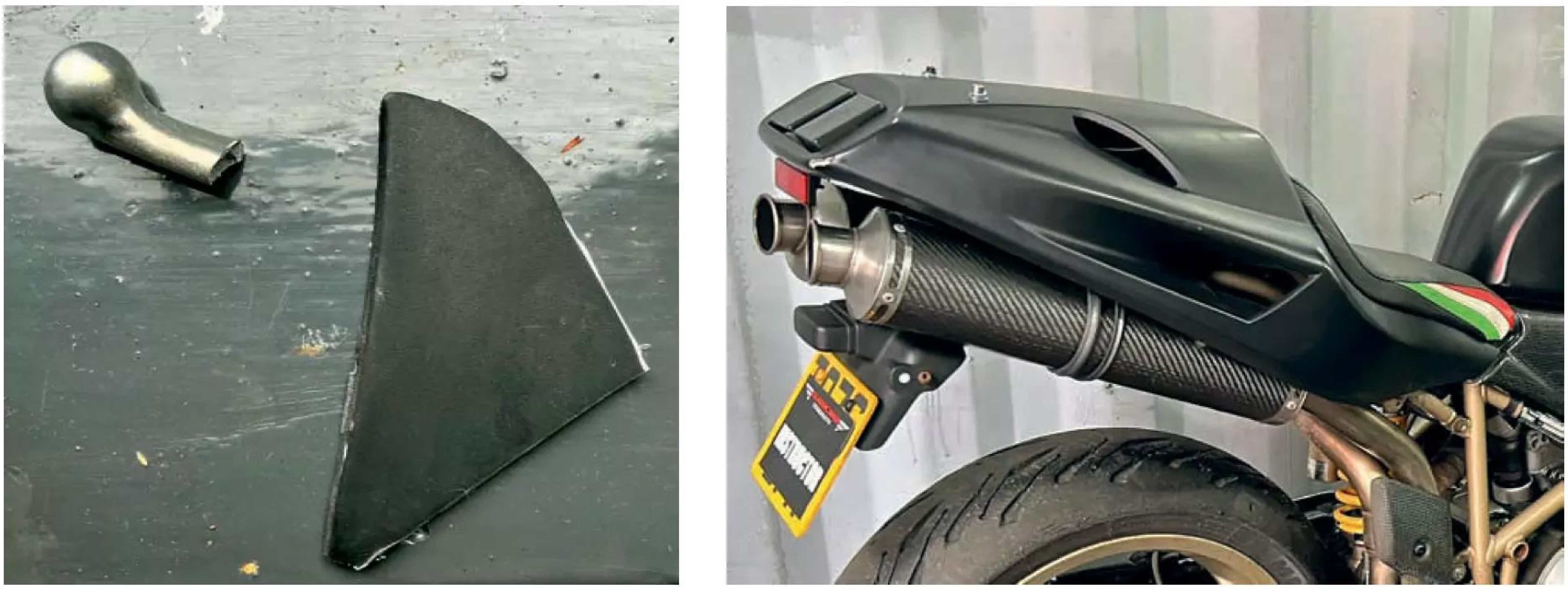
### Problem #1: The seat unit and clutch lever repair

I was able to make a half-decent temporary repair to the damaged seat unit mountings using superglue, extra holes and extra bolts. I'll be honest, it's very ugly, but also solid enough to have moved the need for a proper repair a long way down the list of things that need to be done. As for the clutch lever repair: I fitted a new one as it had snapped at the pivot as well as breaking the blade off, so any attempt to just bodge a longer blade on it at the track to get me back out would have failed.

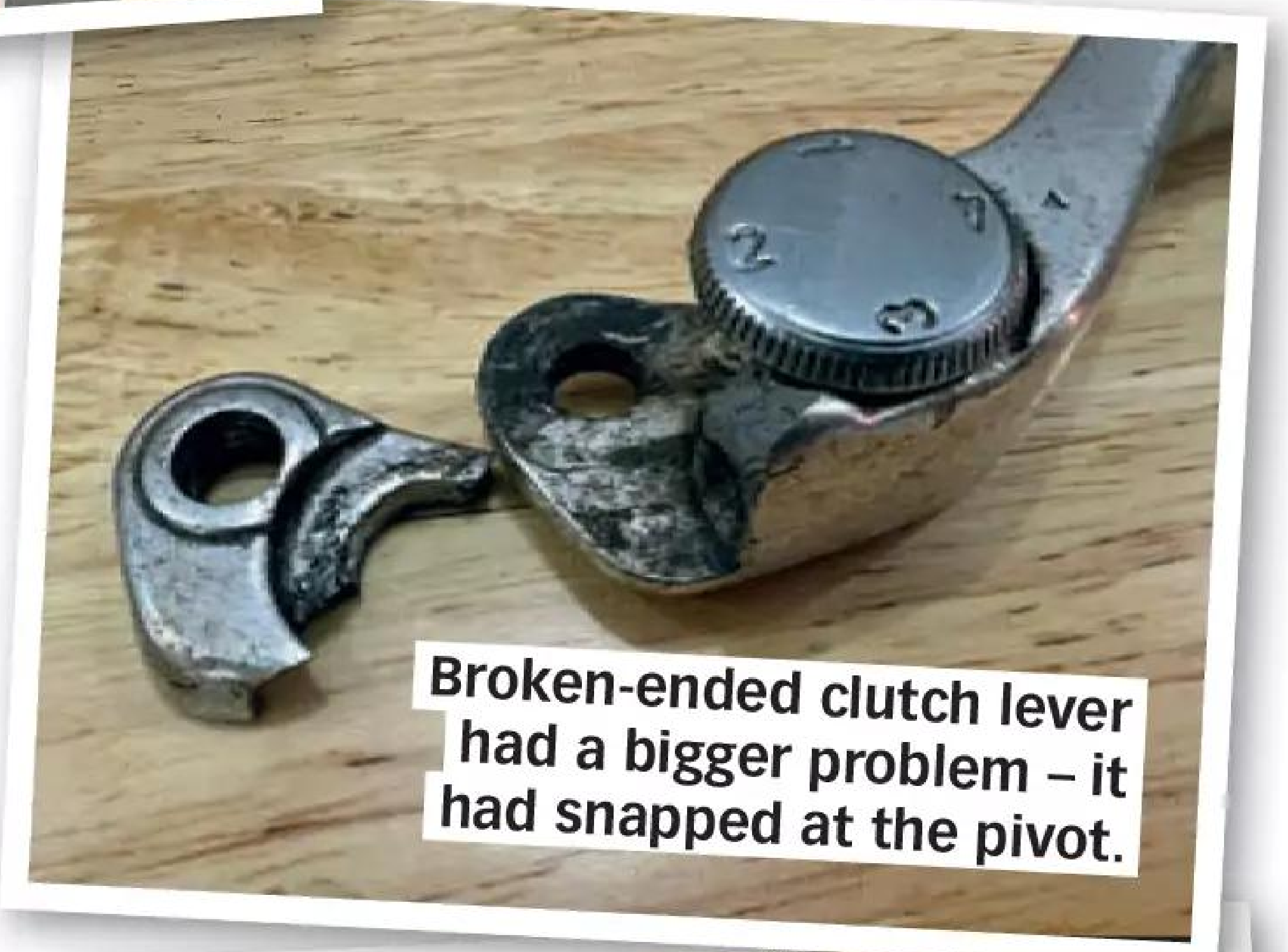
### Problem #2: The side-stand

So, how to fix the side-stand down/in-gear starting conundrum: can't be hard, right? Well, this is a 1998 Ducati. The earlier 748 and 916 models left the factory with the universally unpopular 'suicide stand' fitted. The stand automatically pings up as soon as weight is lifted off it, so from a simple attempt to move the bike a little and getting the timing wrong, or just putting it on the stand without adequate weight to stop it retracting, the chances of you needing to pick your Ducati off the floor are pretty high.

My bike didn't have a suicide stand fitted, so I guessed (wrongly) I just needed to buy a replacement side-stand switch which was fitted to the later bikes. Well, it



The detached seat unit and its shard reunited with the bike using superglue and new (ugly) fixings. Temporarily functional.



Broken-ended clutch lever had a bigger problem – it had snapped at the pivot.

Brand-new lever whacked on.

turned out my bike was originally a suicide stand bike, and like most, had just had a mod to the pivot which stopped it doing the auto-retraction.

So, with no wiring in place, I had zero way forwards using an electronic cut-out, unless I updated the whole loom to facilitate the function from a post-2000 model. As if that isn't bad enough, even if I did make this modification, somewhat uselessly the side-stand switch function is limited to STOPPING the engine from starting whilst the stand is down, whether in gear or not. No, I don't know why either.

Whilst there are aftermarket conversion kits available to retro-fit normal style side-stand switch functionality (stand down + in gear = cut out), as my earlier model didn't even have the basic wiring required for the OE switch I'd reached an impasse. For the moment I just need to sharpen up on not leaving the bike in gear, a perpetual habit of mine which usually does less harm than good.

The previous brake light switch fell apart, leaving these mounting holes empty.

## Problem #3: The brake light switch

An easier fix was needed to the brake light switch, as the glue from a previous owner's repair had failed. Cadwell's exertions meant it had fallen apart. The OE Ducati part is actually from Brembo costing around £35 – I reckon half of the price was for the instruction sheet on how to fit it (see pic!); I've seen less paper used in a block of festival portaloos. For the record, the installation instructions could have been edited down to: 'Connect two bullet connectors, snap switch into place', which would have fitted on a piece of paper the size of a Rizla paper…

## Problem #4: No more flash

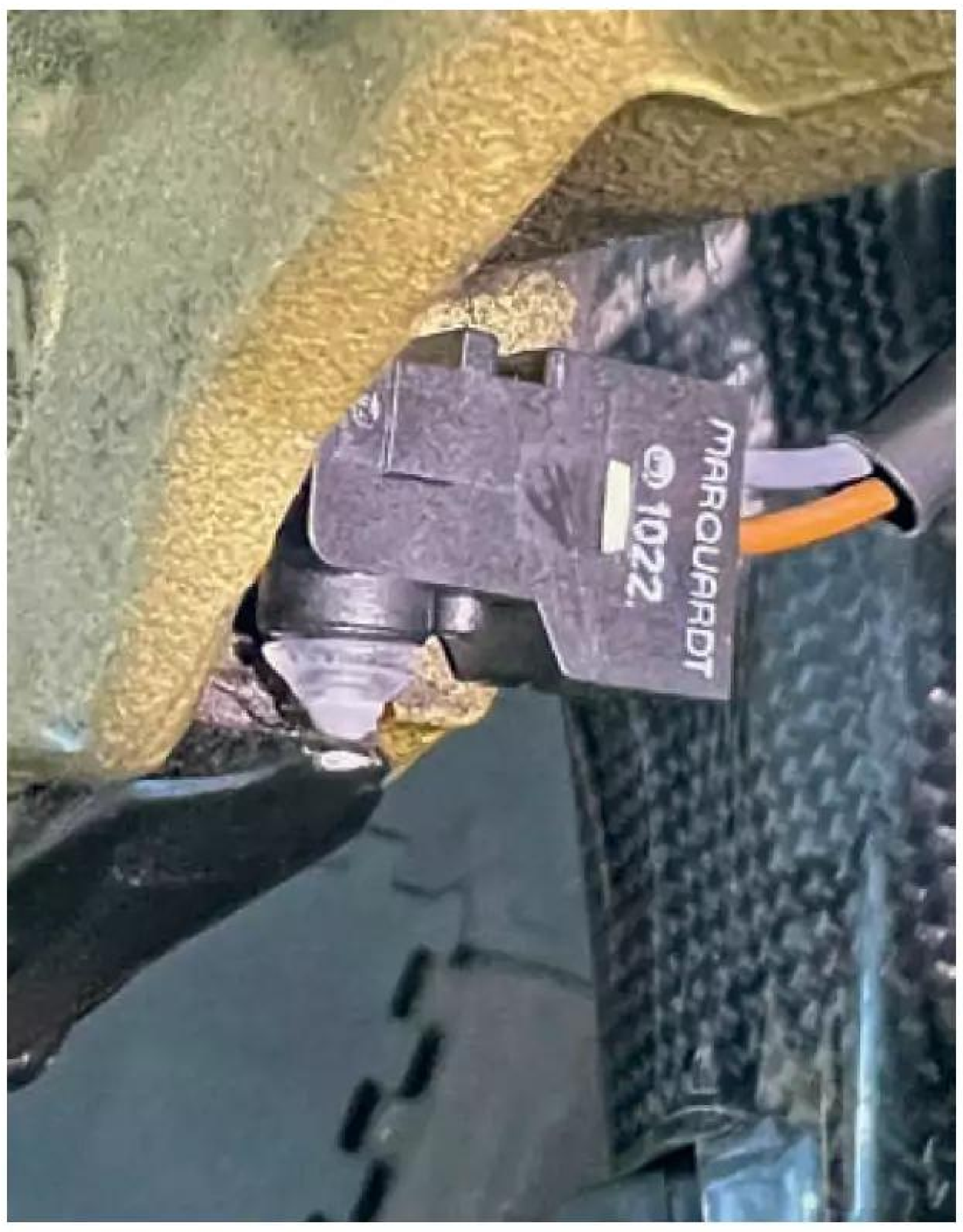
On the subject of bullet connectors, one of the front indicators had stopped working at Cadwell. Checking why revealed a simple disconnect event, with both leads found flailing around inside the fairing. I tried to reconnect them to the very short-leaded female terminals tucked away under the headlight shell, but no go. All I got from that was the desire to smack my head against the workshop wall.

The bullet connectors were super-tight, completely hidden from view, and I swear at certain points were laughing at my failed-fumble-finger attempts to rejoin them. I settled for taking the fairing off and would have saved myself a bunch of time by doing so at the start.

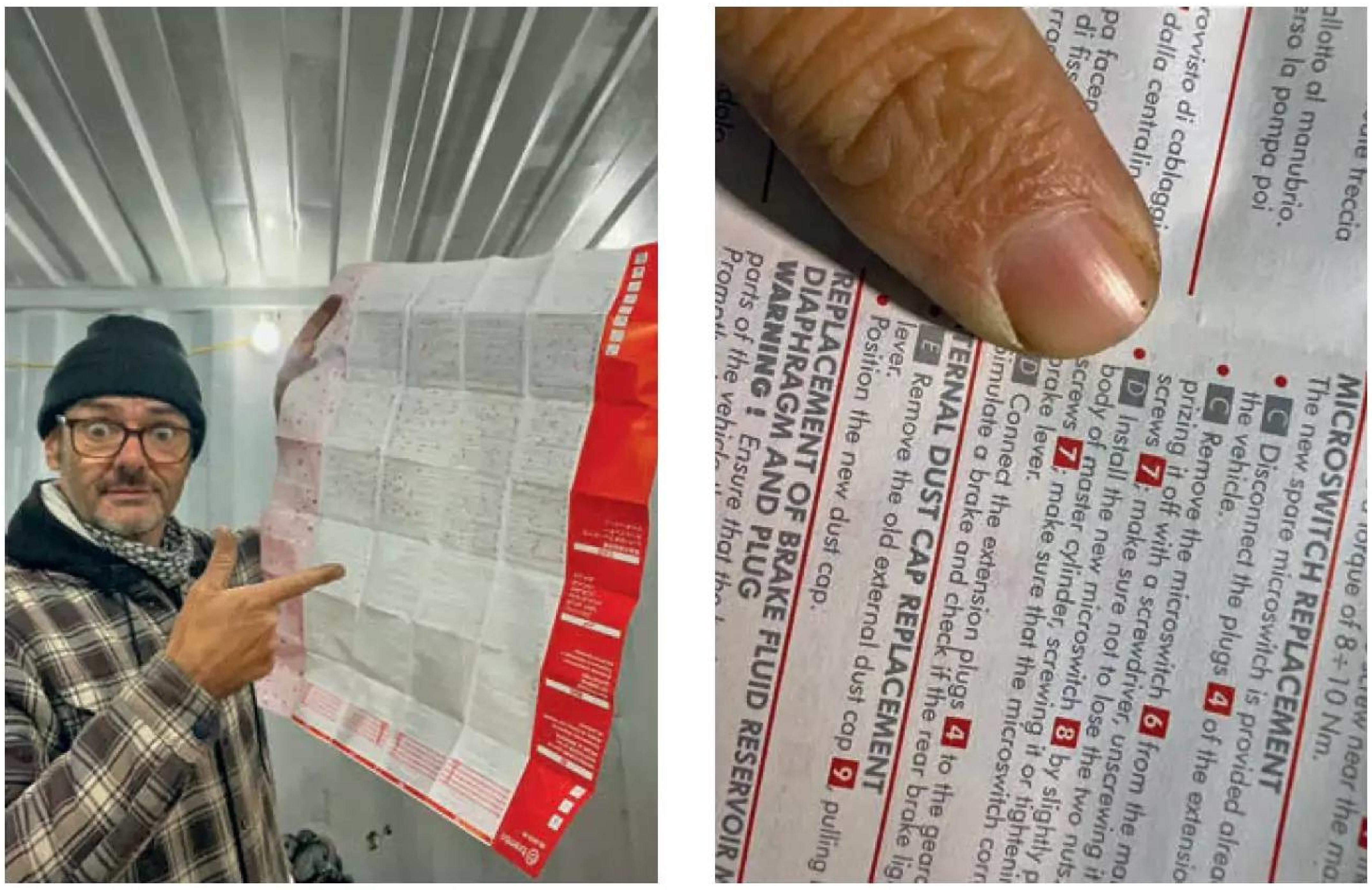
Thanks to the simple fastenings it took less than three minutes. The easiest job of the day then, even with fairing which is thanks to the 'race bike with lights' ethos which informs much of the 748/916 family design.

## Problem #5: Oil leak(s)

When I first got the 748, the sump and the back of the engine had been covered in oil. Having cleaned all this off whilst prepping the bike, I noticed that we were almost back to square one after Cadwell. The sump had remained reasonably dry: originally it had been an obvious-looking fix with the underside mounted ➲



A brand-new brake light switch snapped into place in two seconds.


MICROSWITCH REPLACEMENT
ERNAL DUST CAP REPLACEMENT
REPLACEMENT OF BRAKE FLUID RESERVOIR
DIAPHRAGM AND PLUG
WARNING !

The instruction sheet supplied to effect the two-second repair. Why? Just why?

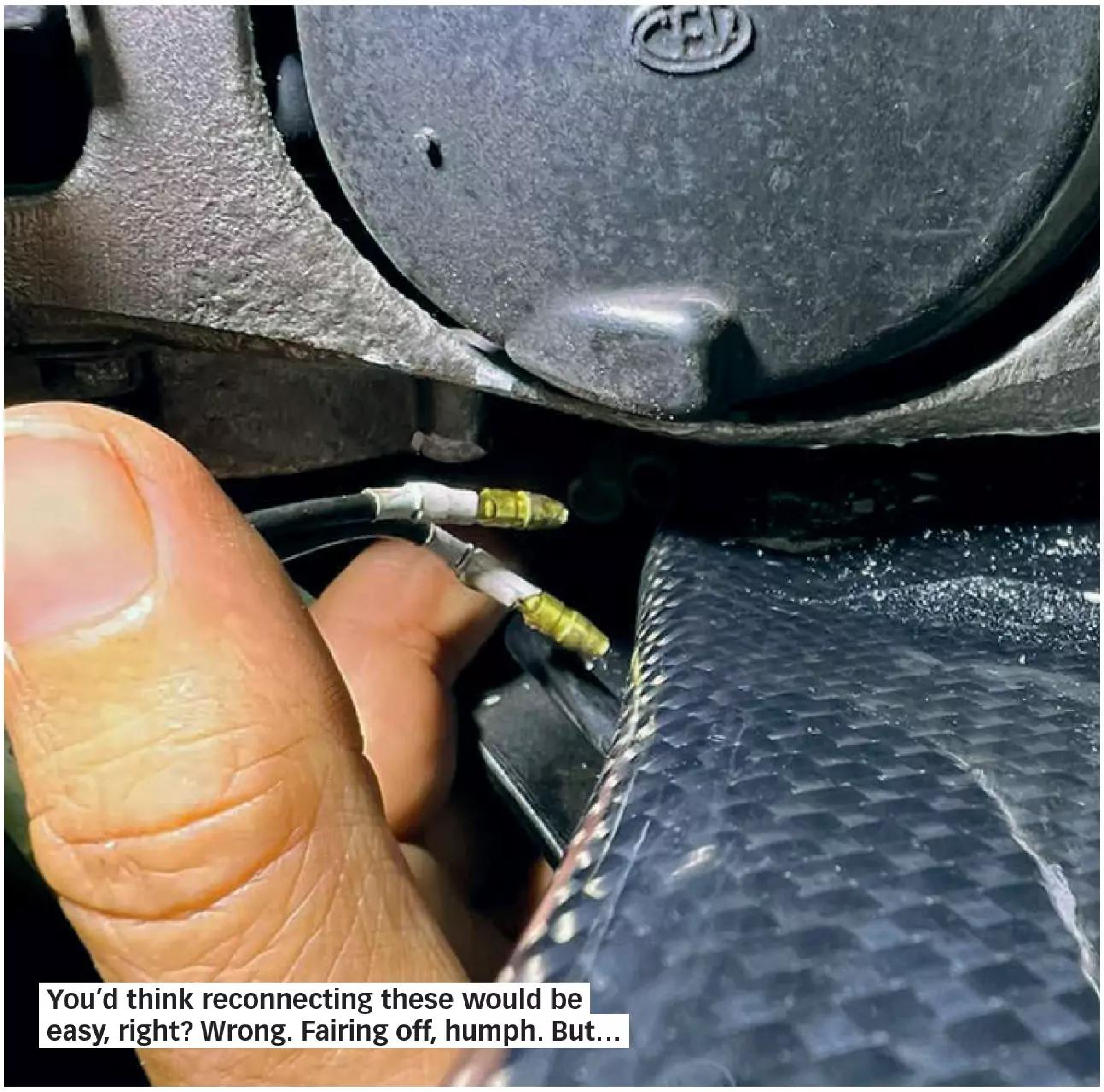
starter motor missing a bolt.

The back of the engine had a slightly more difficult root cause, but talking to Rich Llewellin from Bristol-based Ducati gurus Luigimoto, he reckoned the oil-feed on the rear cylinder would be behind it. It's one of those: 'They all do that Sir' foibles. There is a mod you can make to the oil-feed path, but that requires the rear cylinder to be removed, so naturally, it went on the list of things to do if the engine comes apart.

With the fairing off and looking a little further into the source of the leaks, I chanced upon a missing bolt from the left crankcase just above the sprocket cover. Surely that would be allowing the otherwise oil-tight engine to shed a little of the slippery stuff? I found an M6 socket headed bolt of the correct length before checking the other crankcase bolts were tight. Of the seven I checked, one was hanging out on it's last few threads, three were loose and three were done up properly. Again, Japanese bike ownership does not really prepare you adequately for things like this: 'Remedy self-loosening engine fixings' is now on my future maintenance work list.

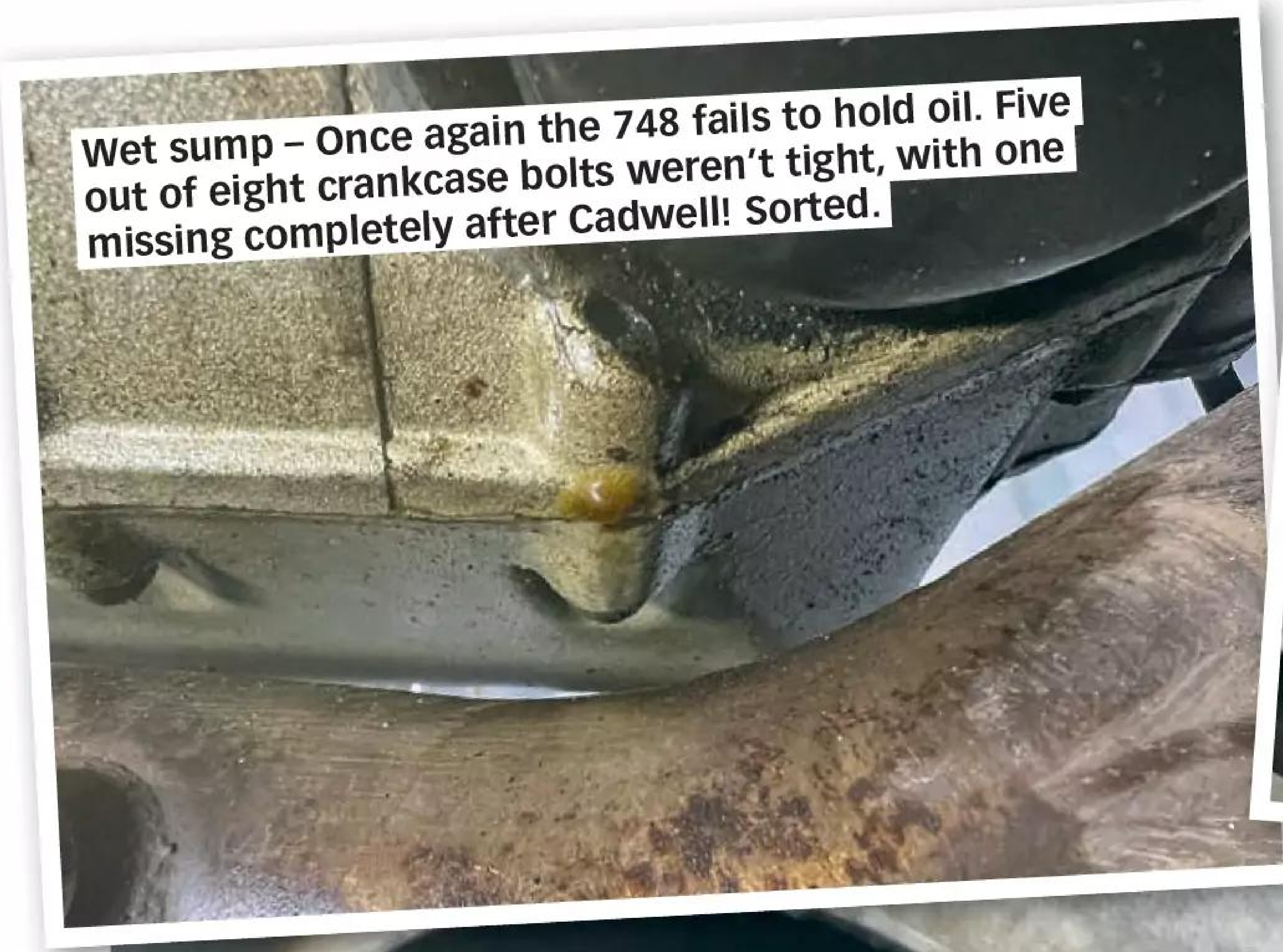
### Problem #6: Where's second gear gone?

The first post-Cadwell test ride got 100 yards before all I got from the gearbox was neutral when trying to select second. Every time I tried to find second, the same thing happened. I travelled a few hundred yards trying to locate second gear. It refused to go in. I don't want to underplay the gravity of this problem – it was one of those moments where your heart drops like a stone.



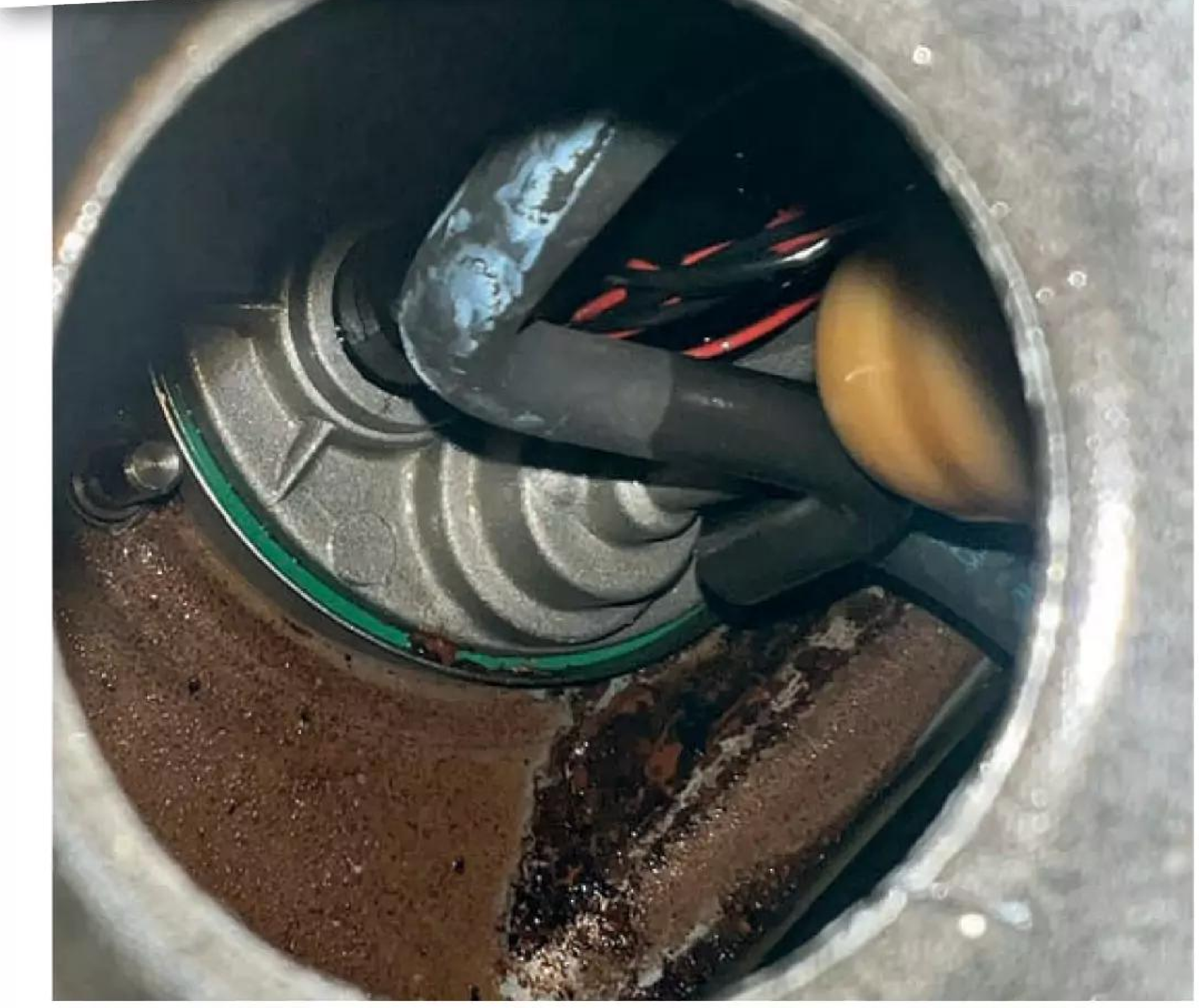
You'd think reconnecting these would be easy, right? Wrong. Fairing off, humph. But...

...it takes less than three minutes to get the fairing off a 748, reconnected, job done.

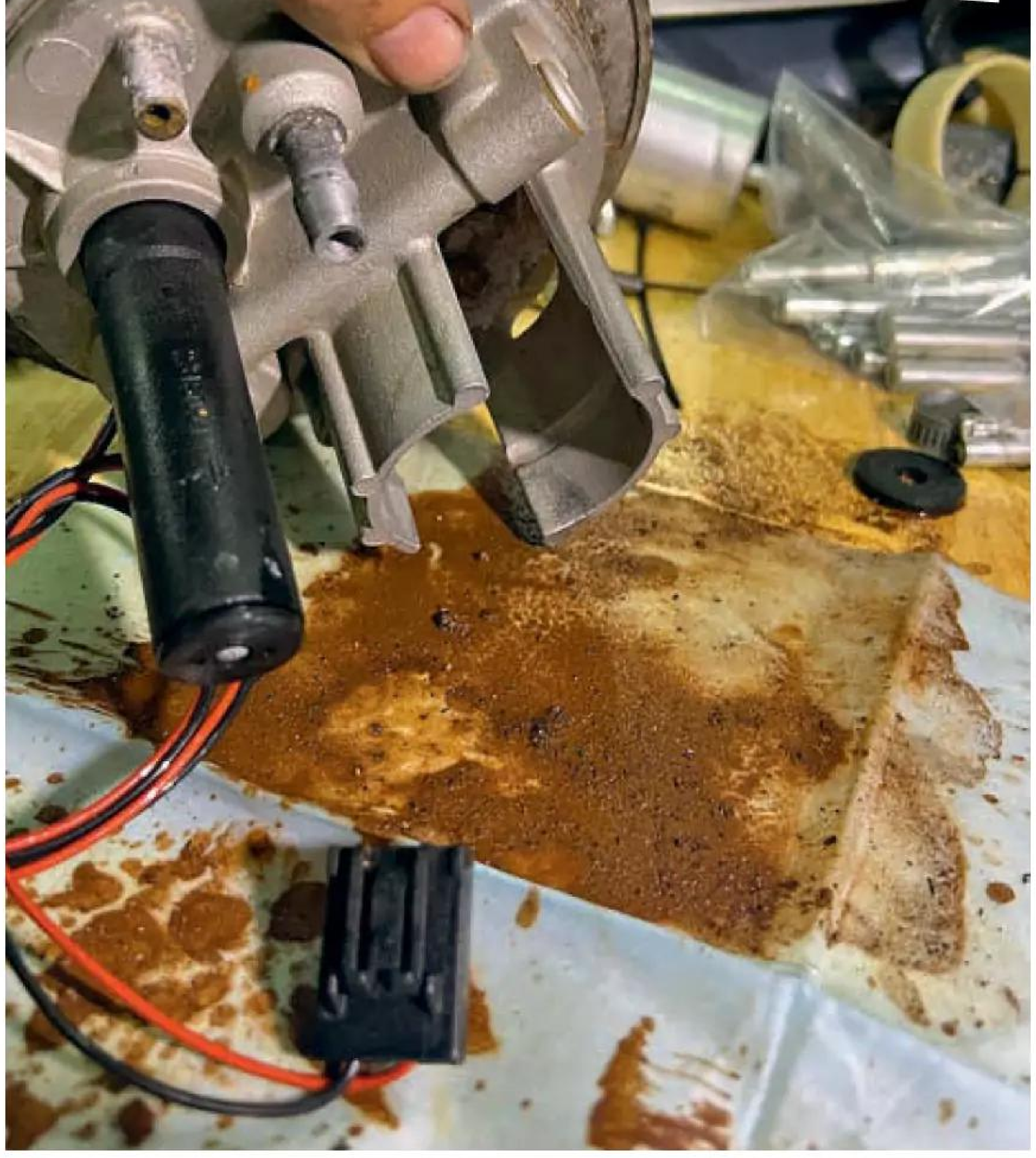


Wet sump – Once again the 748 fails to hold oil. Five out of eight crankcase bolts weren't tight, with one missing completely after Cadwell! Sorted.

The paddock fall had pushed the gear lever towards the frame, stopping selection of second gear and beyond – 30 seconds with mole grips sorted that.



The rough running problems all centre on what's happening in here. The next part is about what we find inside. And it ain't pretty.



Sneak preview: I told you – It ain't pretty!

Stepping aside from the initial outright panic, a quick solution awaited: the gear lever had simply been pushed slightly towards the bike as it hit the ground and was now interfering with the frame. Whenever I tried to make an upshift, the lever fouled the chassis and stopped the lever travel before the next gear had been selected. Phew! A few seconds with some adequate force applied and the gear change was back in its original shape, missing the frame, and finding every gear above first again. Superb. And relax. Well, maybe not, because...

### Problem #7: Rough running

So, with the simpler bits easily sorted, or not (side-stand) it was time to look at the job which was really causing the chin-stroking: Before Cadwell this bike fuelled like a dream – it would tick over and spin up cleanly off the bottom of the rev-range when shown any amount of throttle, hot or cold. But now, tick-over was poor and attempts to rev it up, even gently, often caused it to cut out.

Pulling away was now a lottery as to whether or not the bike would stall when progressive throttle was applied, making it pretty much unrideable. On the upside, once away from tick-over the fuelling remained immaculate, but down low it was now really rough – something had changed.

Although there was potential for many things to be at the root cause of the post-track-day poor running, including throttle body balance, Throttle Position Sensor (TPS) setting or simply poor fuel, fouled plugs, etc., the main culprit as I saw it was the fuel-pump and filter: these are notorious for initially working fine after long-term storage but degrading soon after. Why?

The pump and filter on the 748 are immersed in the tank and everything links up using immersed rubber fuel pipes. These can be severely weakened by ethanol in modern fuel and then start falling apart, shedding material into the fuel-injection system. On this 748 it had gone from being laid-up to being thrashed... A likely cause then.

I'd also noted the 'singing tank' was still with me whenever the tank got warm, which had previously signalled the tank breathers were at least partially blocked. The pair of breathers have apertures just under the fuel cap, but vent through the tank into the fuel-pump baseplate. With the pump and filter service meaning this all had to come out, these could also be accessed for a proper clean-up whilst it was all apart, and before any extra rough-running problems came to fruition.

Now, as I'm on a promise to the editor to keep to a word count for workshop articles, I'm going to have to use a few of them to offer you an apology, but also a teaser:

Delving into the tank turned into quite an epic (and not very pretty) story... I'm amazed this bike ran at all, but that's for next time. cmm

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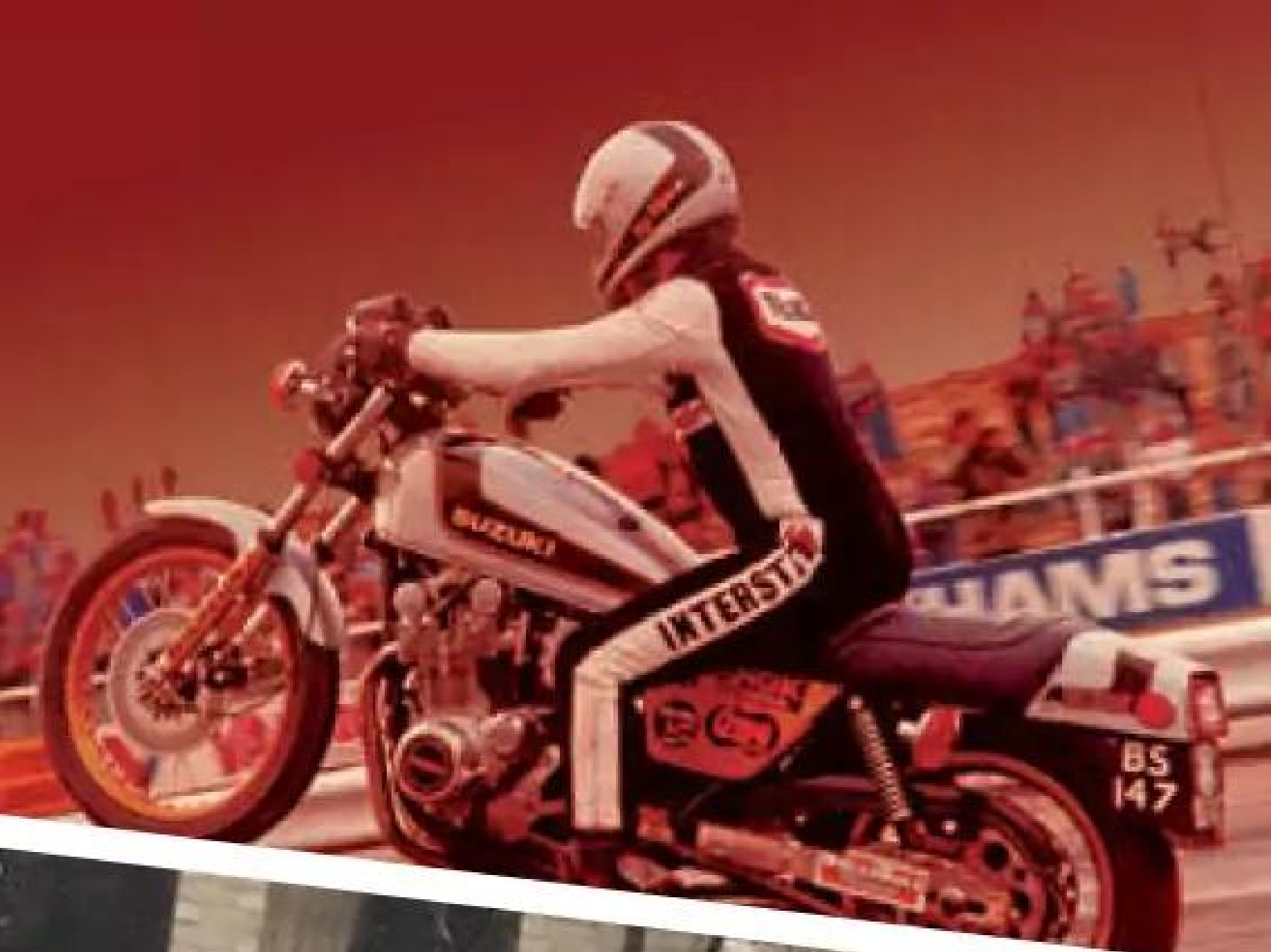
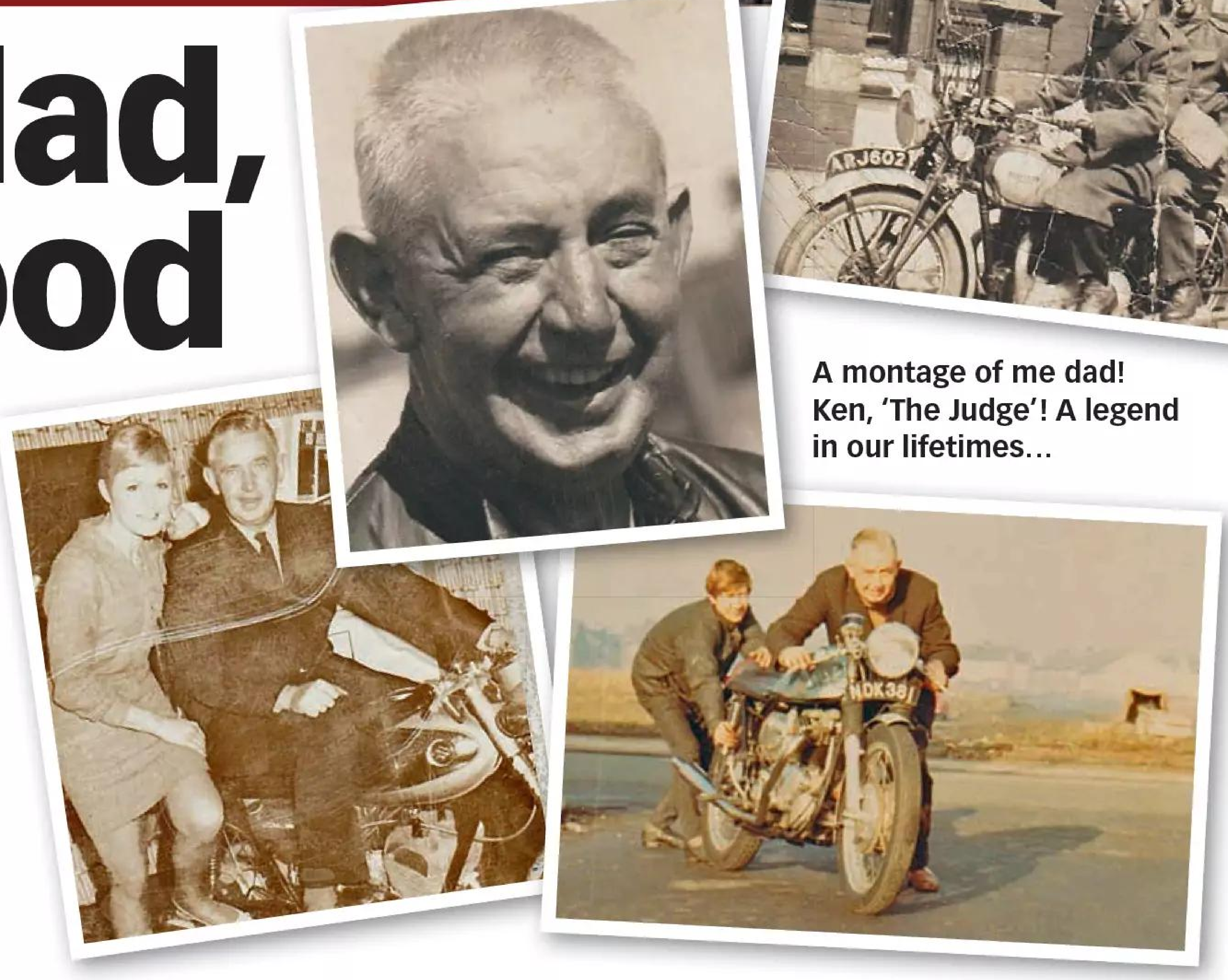
# Pip Higham

## Tuner, engineer, rider



# Doni, dad, Hailwood



A montage of me dad! Ken, 'The Judge'! A legend in our lifetimes...

**To anyone who encountered him – the old man, Ken, 'The Judge' – my dad truly was a force of nature; well-educated, despite spending an inordinate amount of time playing snooker for money with a bunch of ethnically diverse lads up Shude Hill when he should have been studying at Manchester Grammar School (nice place, he won a scholarship to go there...).**

He was a tough old boy and didn't suffer fools; he also raced a Rudge Ulster and then a Triumph Tiger 100, rigid frame and girder forks to boot! Bizarrely, on leafing through some ancient letters I found his race competitor pass for 23 July, 1939. Five weeks later and mayhem broke out in Europe, and he didn't race at Donington ever again. Shame.

By the end of the war he was married and Carol, my big sis, put in an appearance. Bill and I followed neatly at two-year intervals. Many years passed and Ken never lost his enthusiasm for speed and one bloke in particular: Stanley Michael Bailey Hailwood. Now, I had a picture on my bedroom wall of Mike on his 125cc Desmo Ducati and frequently we would swop nuggets of information about 'What Mike Did Next'. I would be berated at school for listening to the titanic battles between Ago and Mike at the TT. My little Aero transistor set, the size of a packet of fags, was like a magnet for me and two other lads in my class, and much better than the Corn Laws or oxbow lakes!

Fast-forward a few years and SMB has blitzed the TT on the Sports Motorcycles Ducati in the F1 class for his 14th TT win;not too shabby, eh? And guess what? He's mooted to put in an appearance at Donington on Sunday, 9 July, coming hot on the heels of his TT victory. Mike had also won at the Mallory Post TT event; he was smokin'! A plot was hatched involving subterfuge, bribery and various unkeepable promises to my Mum and girlfriend – we were going to see Mike at Donington!

I still remember that day, warm and atmospheric. Mike didn't win, he came second, but it didn't matter, in my eyes he was pretty amazing and to see The Judge's face light up when he boomed past on Steve Wynne's Ducati was priceless. We'd gone in Ken's 3.0-litre Capri and stopped for a drink on the way back home. What a day!

Almost exactly a month later dad went to sleep and didn't wake up. Taken too soon, but what memories he left; a man amongst men, far from perfect, but utterly unforgettable.

After trying to get my ma enthusiastic about a BSA Dandy scooter, (this, incidentally, was not a good idea for reasons I might explain later), he subsequently bought her a new Triumph Tina scooter. Not a T10 I hasten to add. The Tina was far worse with its sit-upon activated ignition inhibitor that wisely prevented the rapid departure of the creature if someone happened to grab a fistful while the engine was running.

The day he bought it was the first time I'd ridden anything without pedals. He picked me up from school aged 12 and proceeded to turn me loose around the local golf club car park.

As if he wasn't in enough trouble there already, generally drinking games and 'Snooker Bowls' (a raucous game played after far too much alcohol on a full-size billiard table, always ending in a fight, great fun though) for cash, riled the elder, more staid members. Did he care? Nope! So, I hurtled merrily around the car park for half-an-hour without crashing or t-boning the Captain's Rover 3.5. Subsequently, I would yank the Tina out of its shed in the garden and razz it backwards and forwards down the 30 yards or so connecting our front and back gardens.

Whilst I confined my extra-curricular ambles to the garden path, no such inhibitions troubled Ken. For some strange reason we came into possession of a semi works BSA Victor 441cc scrambler. One afternoon I clocked him buttoning up his tweed jacket and adjusting a set of Mark Nines (goggles, they were) to 'snug'.

Then I saw the Victor leaning on the wall. Brother Brian was tying our trade plate to the back mudguard with a couple of bungees... "You're not...?" Well yes, he was, and with a couple of strides the Victor exploded into life. (Loud? Oh yes!)

Brian tumbled to the deck and off he went, down Blantyre Avenue. Brapp! Brrapp! BRRRAAAPP!! Now, trade plates are a handy bit of kit, but not for a bike with no lights, no horn, no silencer and no registration docs... on totally illegal, 'Not For Road Use' knobblies. A minute later he blatted along Manchester Road (that's the A6 incidentally!), the Victor exhibiting a serious dose of St Vitas Dance as Ken alternately mashed and then got off the gas. His smile was bloody priceless. *cmm*

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